THE ELFIN ARTIST
AND OTHER POEMS

ALFRED NOYES

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THE ELFIN ARTIST

WORKS OF ALFRED NOYES

COLLECTED POEMS—*2 Vols.*
THE LORD OF MISRULE
A BELGIAN CHRISTMAS EVE
THE WINE-PRESS
WALKING SHADOWS—*Prose*
TALES OF THE MERMAID TAVERN
SHERWOOD
THE ENCHANTED ISLAND
AND OTHER POEMS
DRAKE: AN ENGLISH EPIC
POEMS
THE FLOWER OF OLD JAPAN
THE GOLDEN HYNDE
THE NEW MORNING

THE ELFIN ARTIST

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ALFRED NOYES

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TO
MY WIFE

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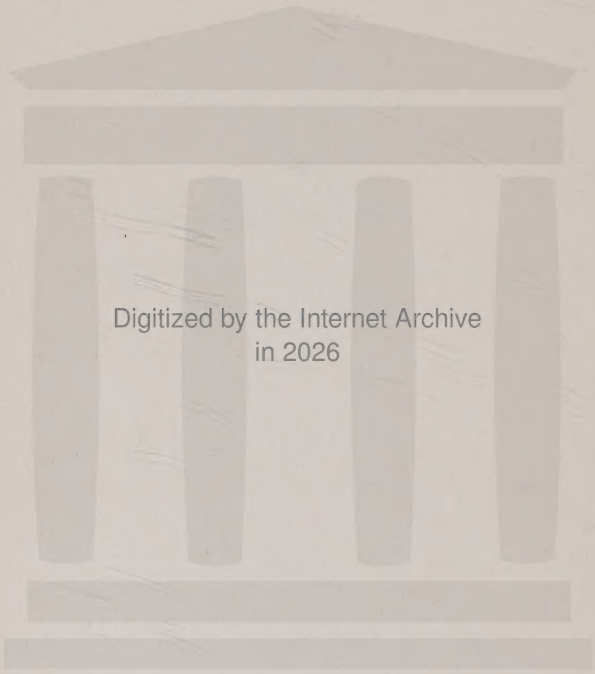

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THE ELFIN ARTIST

THE ELFIN ARTIST

IN a glade of an elfin forest
When Sussex was Eden-new,
I came on an elvish painter
And watched as his picture grew.
A harebell nodded beside him.
He dipt his brush in the dew.

And it might be the wild thyme round him
That shone in that dark strange ring;
But his brushes were bees' antennæ,
His knife was a wasp's blue sting;
And his gorgeous exquisite palette
Was a butterfly's fan-shaped wing.

And he mingled its powdery colours
And painted the lights that pass,
On a delicate cobweb canvas
That gleamed like a magic glass,
And bloomed like a banner of elf-land,
Between two stalks of grass;

Till it shone like an angel's feather
With sky-born opal and rose,
And gold from the foot of the rainbow,
And colours that no man knows;
And I laughed in the sweet May weather,
Because of the themes he chose.

For he painted the things that matter,
The tints that we all pass by,
Like the little blue wreaths of incense
That the wild thyme breathes to the sky;
Or the first white bud of the hawthorn,
And the light in a blackbird's eye;

And the shadows on soft white cloud-peaks
That carolling skylarks throw,
Dark dots on the slumbering splendours
That under the wild wings flow,
Wee shadows like violets trembling
On the unseen breasts of snow;

With petals too lovely for colour
That shake to the rapturous wings,

And grow as the bird draws near them,
And die as he mounts and sings;—
Ah, only those exquisite brushes
Could paint these marvellous things.

EARTH AND HER BIRDS

(Shadow-of-a-Leaf Sings)

BRAVE birds that climb those blue
Dawn-tinted towers,
With notes like showers of dew
From elf-tossed flowers,
Shake your mad wings in mirth,
Betray, betray
The secret thoughts of May,
That heaven, once more, may marry our wild earth.

Dark gipsy, she would dance
Unmated still,
Challenging, glance for glance,
Her lord's high will,
But that her thoughts take wing
While she lies sleeping;
And, into glory leaping,
Like birds, at sunrise, to her bride-groom sing.

EARTH AND HER BIRDS

See how with cheeks aglow
And lips apart,
While warm winds, murmuring low
Lay bare her heart,
She dreams that she can hide
Its rosy light
In ferns and flowers this night,
And swim like Dian through this hawthorn-tide.

Then shame her, lavrocks, shame her,
At break of day,
That heaven may trap and tame her
This mad sweet May.
Let all your feathered choir
Leave those warm nests
Between her dawn-flushed breasts,
And soar to heaven, singing her young desire.

MOUNTAIN LAUREL *

(A Connecticut poet returns to his hills singing)

I HAVE been wandering in the lonely valleys,
Where mountain laurel grows
And, in among the rocks, and the tall dark pine-trees
The foam of the young bloom flows,
In a riot of rose-white stars, all drenched with the dew-fall,
And musical with the bee,
Let the fog-bound cities over their dead wreaths quarrel.
Wild laurel for me!

Wild laurel—mountain laurel—
Bright as the breast of a cloud at break of day,
White-flowering laurel, wild mountain laurel,
Rose-dappled snowdrifts, warm with the honey of May!

* Dedicated to my friends Carl and E. B. Stoeckel, in memory of one of their music festivals at Norfolk, Connecticut.

MOUNTAIN LAUREL

On the happy hill-sides, in the green valleys of Connecticut,
Where the trout-streams go carolling to the sea,
I have laughed with the lovers of song and heard them singing
"Wild laurel for me!"

Far, far away is the throng that has never known beauty,
Or looked upon unstained skies.
Did they think that my songs would scramble for withered bay-leaves
In the streets where the brown fog lies?
They never have seen their wings, then, beating westward,
To the heights where song is free,
To the hills where the laurel is drenched with the dawn's own colours,
Wild laurel for me!

Wild laurel—mountain laurel—
Where Robert o' Lincoln sings in the dawn and the dew,

MOUNTAIN LAUREL

White-flowering laurel—wild mountain laurel
Where song springs fresh from the heart, and the heart is true!
They have gathered the sheep to their fold, but where is the eagle?
They have bridled their steeds, but when have they tamed the sea,
They have caged the wings, but never the heart of the singer,
"Wild laurel for me!"

If I never should find you again, O, lost companions,
When the rose-red month begins,
With the wood-smoke curling blue by the Indian river,
And the sound of the violins,
In dreams the breath of your green glens would still haunt me,
Where night and her stars, drawing down on blossom and tree,
Turn earth to heaven, and whisper their love till daybreak.
Wild laurel for me!

MOUNTAIN LAUREL

Wild laurel—mountain laurel—
O, mount again, wild wings, to the stainless blue,
White-flowering laurel, wild mountain laurel,
And all the glory of song that the young heart knew.
I have lived. I have loved. I have sung in the happy valleys,
Where the trout-streams go carolling to the sea,
I have met the lovers of song in the sunset bringing
"Wild laurel for me!"

SEA-DISTANCES

HIS native sea-washed isle
Was bleak and bare.
Far off, there seemed to smile
An isle more fair.

Blue as the smoke of Spring
Its far hills rose,
A delicate azure ring
Crowned with faint snows.

At dusk, a rose-red star
Set free from wrong,
It beaconed him afar,
His whole life long.

Not till old age drew nigh
He voyaged there.
He saw the colours die
As he drew near.

SEA-DISTANCES

It towered above him, bleak
  And cold, death-cold.
From peak to phantom peak
  A grey mist rolled.

Then, under his arched hand,
  From that bare shore,
Back, at his own dear land,
  He gazed, once more.

Clothed with the tints he knew,
  He saw it smile,—
Opal, and rose and blue,
  His native isle.

THE INN OF APOLLO

HAVE you supped at the Inn of Apollo,
While the last light fades from the West?
Has the Lord of the sun, at the world's end,
Poured you his ripest and best?
O, there's wine in that Inn of Apollo;

Wine, mellow and deep as the sunset,
With mirth in it, singing as loud
As the skylark sings in a high wind,
High over a crisp white cloud.
Have you laughed in that Inn of Apollo?

Was the whole world molten in music
At once, by the heat of that wine?
Did the stars and the tides and your own heart
Dance with the heavenly Nine?
For they dance in that Inn of Apollo.

Was their poetry croaked by the sages,
  Or born in a whisper of wings?
For the music that masters the ages,
  Be sure, is the music that sings!
Yes, they sing in that Inn of Apollo.

THE VICTORIOUS DEAD

I

NOW, for their sake, our lands grow lovelier,
There's not one grey cliff shouldering back the sea,
Nor one forsaken hill that does not wear
The visible radiance of their memory.

Our highlands are not lonely as of old;
For all their crags with that pure light are crowned;
And, round our Sussex farms, from fold to fold,
Tread where you will, you tread on haunted ground.

There's not one glen where happy hearts could roam
That is not filled with tenderer shadows now.
There's not one lane that used to lead them home
But breathes their thoughts to-day from every bough.

There's not one leaf on all these quickening trees,
Nor way-side flower but breathes their messages.

II

Now, in the morning of a nobler age,
  Though night-born eyes, long-taught to fear
    the sun,
Would still delay that glorious heritage,
  Make firm, O God, the peace our dead have
    won.

For folly shakes the tinsel on its head
  And points us back to darkness and to hell,
Cackling, *"Beware of visions,"* while our dead
  Whisper, *"It was for visions that we fell."*

They never knew the secret game of power.
  All that this earth can give they thrust aside.
They crowded all their youth into an hour,
  And, for one fleeting dream of right, they died.

Oh, if we fail them, in that awful trust,
How should we bear those voices from the dust?

III

You, broken-hearted, comfort you again!
Eternal Justice guards the gift they gave.
The goal of all that struggling hope and pain
Is not the sophists' universal grave.

Our sun shall perish; but they cannot die.
Their realm of light is far more true than ours.
Behind the veil of earth and sea and sky
They live and move and work with nobler powers.

They have thrust wide open every long-locked portal
Of man's dark mind to that eternal light;
Cast off this flesh in proof of things immortal,
And built an altar that out-shines our night.

The faith they proved is of immortal worth.
The souls that proved it are not dust and earth.

IV

A little while we may not see their eyes
Or touch their hands, for they are far too near;
But soul to soul, the life that never dies
Speaks to the life that waits its freedom here.

They have made their land one living shrine. Their words
Are breathed in glory from each woodland bough;
And, where the may-tree shakes with song of birds,
Their young unwhispered joys are singing now.

By meadow and mountain, river and hawthorn-brake,
In sacramental peace, from sea to sea,
The land they loved grows lovelier for their sake,
Shines with their hope, enshrines their memory,

Communes with heaven again, and makes us whole,
Through man's new faith in man's immortal soul.

PETER QUINCE

PETER QUINCE was nine years old,
When he see'd what never was told.

When he crossed the fairy fern,
Peter had no more to learn.

Just as the day began to die,
He see'd 'em rustling on the sky;

Ferns, like small green finger-prints
Pressed against them rosy tints,

Mother-o'-pearl and opal tinges
Dying along their whispering fringes,

Every colour, as it died,
Beaconing, *Come, to the other side.*

Up he crept, by the shrew-mouse track,
A robin chirped, *You woant come back.*

Through the ferns he crept to look.

. . . . . .

There he found a gurt wide book;

Much too big for a child to hold.
Its clasps were made of sunset gold.

It smelled like old ship's timbers do.
He began to read it through.

All the magic pictures burned,
Like stained windows, as he turned

Page by big black-lettered page,
Thick as cream, and ripe with age

There he read, till all grew dim.
Then green glow-worms lighted him.

There he read till he forgot
All that ever his teachers taught.

. . . . . .

Someone, old as the moon, crept back,
Late that night by the shrew-mouse track.

Someone, taller maybe, by an inch.
Boys grow fast. He'll do at a pinch.

Only, folks that know'd him claim
Peter's wits were never the same.

Ev'ryone said that Peter Quince
H'aint been never the same child since.

Now he'd sit, in a trance, for hours,
Talkin' softly to bees and flowers.

Now, in the ingle-nook at night,
Turn his face from the candle-light;

Till, as you thought him fast asleep,
You'd see his eyes were wide and deep;

And, in their wild magic glow,
Rainbow colours 'ud come and go.

Dame Quince never could wholly wake him,
So they say, tho' she'd call and shake him.

He sat dreaming. He sat bowed
In a white sleep, like a cloud.

Over his dim face at whiles,
Flickered liddle elvish smiles.

. . . . . .

Once, the robin at the pane,
Tried to chirp the truth again.

Peter Quince has crossed the fern.
Peter Quince will not return.

Drive the changeling from your chair!
That's not Peter dreaming there.

Peter's crossed the fern to look.
Peter's found the magic book.

Ah, Dame Quince was busy sobbin',
So she couldn't hear poor Robin.

And the changeling, in a dream,
Supped that night, on pears and cream.

Night by night, he cleared his platter;
And—from moon to moon—grew fatter;

Mostly dumb, or muttering dimly
When the smoke blew down the chimley,

Peter's turned another page,
I have almost earned my wage.

Then the good dame's eyelids shone.

. . . . . .

This was many a year agone.
Peter Quince is reading on.

THE GREEN MAN

IN those old days at Brighthelmstone,
When art was half Chinese,
And Venus, dipped by Martha Gunn,
Improved the shining seas;
When every dandy walked the Steyne
In something strange and new,
The Green Man,
The Green Man,
Made quite a how-dy-doo.

Green pantaloons, green waistcoat,
Green frock and green cravat,
Green gloves and green silk handkerchief,
Green shoes and tall green hat,—
He took the air in a green gig,
From eight o'clock till ten;
O, the Green Man,
The Green Man,
Was quite successful then.

And though, beneath that golden dome,
That Chinese pup of Paul's,
With snow and azure, rose and foam,
He danced at routs and balls,
Though all the laughing flowers on earth
Around the room he'd swing,
The Green Man,
The Green Man,
Remained a leaf of Spring.

His rooms, they said, his chairs, his bed,
Were green as meadows are.
He dined on hearts of lettuces.
He wore an emerald star.
O, many a fop in blue and gold
His little hour might shine,
Till the Green Man,
The Green Man,
Came strutting up the Steyne.

His name, I think, was William White,
He wished to keep it green.
His fond ambition reached its height
When Brighton's frolic queen,

FitzHerbert, stopped her crimson chair,
And dropped her flirting fan,
With "Tee, hee, hee!
O, look! O, see!
Here comes that odd Green Man!"

Alack, he reached it all too well,
Despite his will to fame,
Thenceforth he shone for beau and belle
By that ambiguous name;
So William White was quite forgot,
By matron, fop, and maid;
Ay, White became
The Green Man;
Became an April shade.

Now, even his green and ghostly gig,
The green whip in his hand,
The green lights in his powdered wig,
Are vanished from the land.
Green livery, darkling emerald star, . . .
Not even their wraiths are seen.
And nobody knows
The Green Man,
Although his grave is green.

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THE SILVER CROOK

I WAS mistuk, once, for the Poape of Roame . . .
The drawled fantastic words came floating down
Behind me, five long years ago, when last
I left the old shepherd, Bramble, by his fold.
Bramble was fond, you'll judge, of his own tales,
And cast a gorgeous fly for the unwary:
But I was late, and could not listen then,
Despite his eager leer.
Yet, many a night,
And many a league from home, out of a dream
Of white chalk coasts, and roofs of Horsham stone,
Coloured like russet apples, there would come
Music of sheep-bells, baaing of black-nosed lambs,
Barking of two wise dogs, crushed scents of thyme,
A silver crook, bright as the morning star.

Above the naked downs. Then—Bramble's voice,
I was mistuk, once, for the Poape of Roame,
Would almost wake me, wondering what he meant.

Now, five years later, while the larks went up
Over the dew-ponds in a wild-winged glory,
And all the Sussex downs, from weald to sea,
Were patched like one wide crazy quilt, in squares
Of yellow and crimson, clover and mustard-flower,
Edged with white chalk, I found him once again.
He leaned upon his crook, unbudged by war,
Unchanged, and leering eagerly as of old.

How should I paint old Bramble—the shrewd face,
Brown as the wrinkled loam, the bright brown eyes,
The patriarchal beard, the moleskin cap,
The boots that looked like tree-stumps, the loose cloak
Tanned by all weathers,—every inch of him
A growth of Sussex soil. His back was bent
Like wind-blown hawthorn, turning from the sea,
With roots that strike the deeper.

Well content
With all his world, and boastful as a child,
In splendid innocence of the worldling's way,
Whose murderous ego skulks behind a hedge
Of modest privet,—no, I cannot paint him.
Better to let him talk, and paint himself.
"Marnin'," he said; and swept away five years.
With absolute dominion over time,
Waiving all prelude, he picked up the thread
We dropped that day, and cast his bait again:—
I was mistuk, once, for the Poape of Roame.—
"Tell me," I said. "Explain. I've dreamed of it."—
"I racken you doan't believe it. Drunken Dick,
'Ull tell you 'tis as true's I'm stannin' here.
It happened along of this old silver crook.
I call it silver 'cos it shines so far.
My wife can see it over at Ovingdean
When I'm on Telscombe Tye. They doan't mek crooks
Like this in Sussex now. They've lost the way
To shape 'em. That's what they French papists knowed
Over at Arundel. They tried to buy

My crook, to carry in church. But I woan't sell 'en.
I've heerd there's magic in a crook like this,—
White magic. Well, I rackon it did save Dick
More ways than one, that night, from the old Black Ram.
I've med a song about it. There was once
A Lunnon poet, down here for his health,
Asked me to sing it to 'un, an' I did.
It med him laff, too. 'Sing it again,' he says
'But go slow, this time.' 'No, I woan't,' I says
(*I* knowed what *he* was trying). 'No,' I says,
'I woan't go slow. You'll ketch 'un if I do.'
You see, he meks a tedious mort of money
From these here ballad books, an' I wer'n't goin'
To let these Lunnon chuckle-heads suck my brains.
I med it to thet ancient tune you liked,
The Brown Girl. 'Member it?"
Bramble cleared his throat,
Spat at a bee, leaned forward on his crook,
Fixed his brown eyes upon a distant spire,
Solemnly swelled his lungs, once, twice, and thrice;
Then, like an old brown thrush, began to sing:—

"The Devil turns round when he hears the sound
Of bells in a Sussex foald.
One crack, I rackon, from this good crook
Would make old Scratch leave hoald.
They can't shape crooks to-day like mine,
For the liddle folk helped 'em then.
I've heerd some say as they've see'd 'en shine
From Ditchling to Fairlight Glen.

I loaned 'em a loanst o' my crook one day
To carry in Arundel.
They'd buy 'en to show in their church, they say;
But goald woan't mek me sell.
I never should find a crook so slick,
So silver in the sun;
And, if you talk to Drunken Dick,
He'll tell you what it's done.

You'll find him spannelling round the Plough;
And, Lord! when Dick was young,
He'd drink enough to draown a cow,
And roughen a tiger's tongue.

He'd drink Black Ram till his noäse turned blue,
And the liddle black mice turned white.
You ask 'en what my crook can do,
An' what he see'd that night.

He says, as through the fern he ran
('Twas Pharisees' fern, say I),
A wild potatur, as big as a man,
Arose and winked its eye.
He says it took his arm that night,
And waggled its big brown head,
Then sang: *'This world will never go right*
Till Drunken Dick be dead.'

He shook it off and, rambling round,
Among the goalden gorse,
He heers a kin' of sneering sound
Pro-ciddin' from a horse,
Which reared upright, then said out loud
(While Dick said, 'I'll be danged!')
'His parents will be tedious proud
When Drunken Dick is hanged!'

I rackon 'twould take a barrel of ale,
Betwix' my dinner and tea,

To mek me see the very nex' thing
That Drunken Dick did see;
For first he thought 'twas elephants walked
Behind him on the Tye,
And then he saw fower ricks of straw
That heaved against the sky.

He saw 'em lift. He saw 'em shift.
He saw gurt beards arise,
He saw 'em slowly lumbering down
A hundred times his size;
And, as he ran, he heer'd 'em say,
Whenever his head he turned,
'This world will never be bright and gay
Till Drunken Dick be burned.'

And then as Dick escaped again
And squirmed the churchyard through,
The cock that crowns the weather-vane
Cried *'How d'ye doodle doo?'*
'Why, how d'ye doodle doo?' says Dick,
'I know why *you* go round.'
'There'll be no luck,' that rooster shruck,
'Till Drunken Dick be drowned!'

And then, as Dick dodged round they barns,
And med for the white chalk coast,
He meets Himself, with the two black horns,
And eyes 'twud mek you roast.
'Walcome! walcome!' old Blackamoor cried,
'' 'Tis muttonless day in hell,
So I think I'll have your kidneys, fried,
And a bit of your liver as well.'

Then Dick he loosed a tarr'ble shout,
And the Devil stopped dead to look;
And the sheep-bells rang, and the moon came out,
And it shone on my silver crook.
'I rackon,' says Dick, 'if you're oald Nick,
You'd batter be scramblin' home;
For *those* be the ringers of Arundel,
And *that* is the Poape of Roame.' "

THE SUSSEX SAILOR

ONCE, by Cuckmere Haven,
I heard a sailor sing
Of shores beyond the sunset,
And lands of lasting spring,
Of blue lagoons and palm trees
And isles where all was young;
But this was ever the burden
Of every note he sung:—

O, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land?
Or have you seen her footprints
Upon that shining sand?
Beneath the happy palm trees,
By Eden whispers fanned . . .
O, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land?

And, once in San Diego,
I heard him sing again,

THE SUSSEX SAILOR

Of Amberley, Rye, and Bramber,
And Brede and Fairlight Glen:
The nestling hills of Sussex,
The russet-roofed elfin towns,
And the skylark up in a high wind,
Carolling over the downs.

From Warbleton to Wild Brook
When May is white as foam,
O, have you seen my dearling
On any hills of home?
Or have you seen her shining,
Or only touched her hand?
O, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land.

And, once again, by Cowfold,
I heard him singing low,
'Tis not the leagues of ocean
That hide the hills I know.
The May that shines before me
Has made a ghost of May.
The valleys that I would walk in
Are twenty years away.

THE SUSSEX SAILOR

Ah, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land . . .
On hills that I remember,
In valleys I understand,
So far beyond the sunset,
So very close at hand,—
O, have you seen my true love
In that immortal land?

THE BEE IN CHURCH

THE nestling church at Ovingdean
Was fragrant as a hive in May;
And there was nobody within
To preach, or praise, or pray.

The sunlight slanted through the door,
And through the panes of painted glass,
When I stole in, alone, once more
To feel the ages pass.

Then, through the dim grey hush there droned
An echoing plain-song on tne air,
As if some ghostly priest intoned
An old Gregorian there.

Saint Chrysostom could never lend
More honey to the heavenly Spring
Than seemed to murmur and ascend
On that invisible wing.

THE BEE IN CHURCH

So small he was, I scarce could see
My girdled brown hierophant;
But only a Franciscan bee
In such a bass could chant.

His golden Latin rolled and boomed.
It swayed the altar-flowers anew,
Till all that hive of worship bloomed
With dreams of sun and dew.

Ah, sweet Franciscan of the May,
Dear chaplain of the fairy queen,
You sent a singing heart away
That day, from Ovingdean.

IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

I KNOW a sunset shore
Where warm keen incense on the sea-wind blows,
And dim blue ranches (while these March winds roar)
Drown to the roofs in heliotrope and rose;

Deserts of lost delight,
Cactus and palm and earth of thirsty gold,
Dark purple blooms round eaves of sun-washed white
And that Hesperian fruit men sought of old.

The exquisite drought of love
Throbs in that land, drought that foregoes the dew
And all its life-springs, that the boughs above
May bear the fruits for which it thirsts anew.

And those pure mountains rise
  Behind it, shutting our sad world away,
With shadowy facets where the sunset dies,
  And cliffs like amethyst at the close of day.

An arm's-length off they seem
  At dawn, among the sage-brush; but, at noon,
Their angel trails wind upward like a dream,
  And their bright crests grow distant as the moon.

All day, from peaks of snow,
  The dry ravines refresh their tawny drought,
Till, on the grey-green foot-hills, far below,
  Like clusters of white grapes the lamps come out.

Then, breaths of orange-bloom
  Drift over hushed white ranches on the plain,
And spires of eucalyptus cast their gloom
  On brown adobe cloisters of old Spain.

There, green-tressed pepper grows,
  In willowy trees that drop red tassels down,

And carpet the brown road with tints of rose
Between the palms that aisle the moon-white town.

. . . . . .

Oh, to be wandering there,
Under the palm-trees, on that sunset shore,
Where the waves break in song, and the bright air
Is crystal-clean, and peace is ours once more.

There the lost wonder dwells,
Beauty, reborn in whiteness from the foam;
There Youth returns with all its magic spells,
And the heart finds it long-forgotten home.

There, in that setting sun,
On soft white sand the great slow breaker falls.
There brood the huts where West and East are one,
And the strange air runs wild with elfin calls.

There, gazing far away,
Those brown-legged fisher-folk, with almond eyes,

Crouch by their nets, and through the rose-tinged spray
See their own Orient in those deepening skies.

Through fringes of the West,
They see the teeming East, beyond Japan,
Mother of races that, in age-long quest,
Have rounded earth, but end where they began;

End in the strange recall
To that far childhood, that faint flowering past,
Where some dear shade, loved, lost, the first of all,
Opens the door to their dim home at last.

Home,—home! Where is that land?
Beyond the bounds of earth, the old hungering cry
Aches in the soul, drives us from all we planned,
And sets our sail to seek another sky.

INTERPRETATIONS

IF I could sing to Eastland,
As Westland sings to me,
There should be keener sunlight
From English sea to sea.
Much-doubting men should hope again
And breathe a spacious air,
And eyes would turn to Westland
And find their comrades there.

If I could sing to Westland
As Eastland sings to me,
'Twould tinge their skies with mournful dyes
As old as history,
Ironic as the grave, and cold,
With cynic laughter fraught;
And yet—I think the New World
Could use the grief I brought.

I cannot sing to either
What both will understand;

And so I go between the two
  And weave a twofold strand.
Perhaps my pains will all be lost,
  And both my friends, ere long;
But O, I cannot count the cost
  Of that remembering song.

THE IMMIGRANTS

THEY left the Old World labouring in the night.
They sailed beyond the sunset. They stood dumb
On darkling prows against that westering light
And gazed and dreamed of happier worlds to come.

Darkling and dumb, with hungering eyes they gazed,
Men, women, children, at that wistful sky,
Half-aching for old homes, and half-amazed
At their new courage, as the foam swept by;

Till, towering from this mast-thronged waterway,
Liberty rose, the high torch in her hand;
And each would look at each, and smile, and say,
Is this the land, is this the promised land?

While some looked up, in tears, as if in prayer,
And wondered if all dreams must waste in air.

THE MAYFLOWER

(1620-1920)

I THINK some angel christened her,
Touched her black bows with dew and flame,
And watched her through the sunset bear
The light of England's loveliest name:
But O, the Mayflower's not a ship,
Though Heaven, in one great hour, let slip
Its bloom on one great ship's renown
That sailed three hundred years ago,
From Plymouth Town to Plymouth Town....

O, little fragrant stars of snow
That bloom in England, laughing May,
The sea-wind wafts your scent to-day
Across three thousand miles of spray.

From winding lane and dark sweet coombe
It wafts the breath of Devon bloom;
For fairer lands have fairer flowers

But this one loveliness is ours,—
This whitener of the hedge in spring.
  These hawthorn buds where, drenched with dew,
The bull-finch and green linnet sing,
  When God makes earth and heaven anew.
And O, the Mayflower's not a name!
It is a soul, a living flame,
Honey-hearted, white as foam,
The glory of the hills of home,
That blooms in all our songs and tales,
And broke into immortal sails,
When tyrannous black-browed tempests freed
The starry-petalled, winged seed,
And, over the rough ocean blown
It made new may-boughs of its own.

Hark! To-day the mother-stem
Whispers all her heart to them!
You who doubt her, hear the may
Whispering the wide seas away,—
"What is England, answer ye
Whose heart of heart is Liberty;
For only in such hours as this

Her own may tell of all she is.
Athens, Weimar, Rome, have heard,
Her children's glorifying word.
They have praised a hundred lands,
And still kept silence where She stands;
Or, if they turned to her, they said
England slumbers, or is dead.

They have searched her soul with fire
Lest she fail of their desire.
They have lashed her with their blame,
And made a taunt of her own name.
Mockery, anger, careless wit,
With forkéd tongues have struck at it;
Till the stranger in her gate
Wondered at their seeming hate,
And half believed the thing they said,
England slumbers, or is dead.

What is England? Now, at last,
Mightier from that tempering past,
She lifts a prouder head on high,
And her silent deeds reply:—

"I am England, who first gave
Freedom and justice to the slave;
Whose voice and sword and triumphing sea
First gave charters to the free;
Mother of Parliaments, who first broke
Emperors with my thunder stroke . . .
I am that land, I am that land,
Where Shakespeare's soul and Cromwell's hand,
Milton's faith and Byron's fire,
With Newton's, Darwin's thought conspire
To teach what kings have never known
And lead the peoples to their throne.

Though my feet in evil hours
Failed of the height where my soul towers;
Though I have sinned as ye have sinned,
There is no whisper of any wind
The wide world round, where men stand free,
But tells of my vast agony.
Where have I conquered, and not given
Hostages to my free heaven;
Ay, with its first wild day-spring crowned
Mine equal foe the wide world round;

Till, if again at a king I ride
Mine ancient foes are at my side?

I am England. I am She
Who crowned with law my liberty,
And taught my free-born sons to heed
What I taught kings at Runnymede;
Who, when my tyrants rose again,
Broke every link of every chain,
Flung my may-flower to the seas,
And sailed to the Atlantides.
There was England, in that hour,
The pilgrim soul of all my power,
Which rose like a triumphant flame
And made New England in my name.

Ay, though all souls that live on earth
May mingle in your mightier birth,
There is no senate of free men
But echoes my sea-speech again.
The sea that girds and guards my walls
Thunders in your own council halls;
And my hand against strange kings
Loosed to heaven your eaglet's wings."

THE MAYFLOWER

Across three thousand miles of spray,
A ghostly ship sets sail to-day.
But O, you living flowers of may,
Fresh with dew, and white as foam,
I hear your murmuring branches say
"This is England. This is home. . . .

This is New England. This is home."

THE MAN THAT WAS A MULTITUDE

AS I came up to London, to buy my love a ring,
I passed by a tavern where the painted women sing.
Each of 'em was jigging on a greasy fiddler's knee,
And they cackled at the red rose my true love gave to me;
With their––
"Come and see the silly clown that wears a red rose!
Roses are green now, as everybody knows."

They cackled (how they cackled!) crying everything was new.
The old truths were all false, the new lies were true.
By play, by book, by poem, it was easier to say
A new thing, a false thing, than walk the stricter way.
Singing,

THE MAN THAT WAS A MULTITUDE

"It was hard, hard to climb, when only truth was true;
But all may violently run, down into the new."

As I came home by Arundel, the wind blew off the sea.
It brought the almond scent of gorse, and there she came to me,
My true love with the young light that gloried in her eyes,
And my soul rose like a giant to the ancient ordered skies,
Laughing,
Let 'em take their green rose, and pickle it in hell,
For I have seen the red rose that blows by Arundel.

My soul rose like a giant, and O but it was sweet
To tumble all its passion like a wave at her feet;
To leave their tricks behind me, and to find myself again
Walking in the clean sun along a Sussex lane,
Singing,

Let 'em hymn their new love that veers with heat and cold,
But I will sing the true love that never shall grow old.

Then, as we walked together, I was quietly aware
Of a mighty throng around us in the hawthorn-scented air,
And I knew it was the simple folk that wait and listen long,
Ere the soul that makes a nation can unite them in a song.
Then,
"Back," they sang, *"to London-town; and we will march with you;*
Because we like the red rose that Eden Garden knew."

But Satan had a vision five-and-thirty years ago,
When England lost the great faith and said she didn't know.
He whistled up his wicked dwarfs, from all the nooks of night,

And set 'em to the new trick of proving black is white.
Crying,
"Come, my 'intellectuals.' Trample on the dead.
Trample truth into the dust, and throne yourselves instead."

And so it was that rebel imps, in sooty reds and blues,
And little squint-eyed epigrams with scorpions in their shoes,
And white-hot cinders in their breeks to make 'em act like youth,
Came hopping on their hands from hell, to dance upon the truth,
Squeaking,
"All that you have ever dreamed is ashes now and dust.
God's a force—like heat, we think—and love is only lust."

And some would take to poetry, and roll each other's logs;
But, since their throats were crooked, they could only croak like frogs.

And some would take to sculpture, and the naked
Venus died,
As they showed their blocks of marble and declared she slept inside.
Ay,
And others painted pictures like the stern of a baboon;
While their fiddlers, by the tavern, fiddled songs without a tune.

And there we found 'em boasting, "We have mingled earth and sea,
We have planted tare and hemlock where the harvest used to be.
We have broken all the borders, we have neither chart nor plan."
Then they saw the throng approaching, and behold it was a Man,
Chuckling,
"England waits and suffers long, as nations often do,
But the Man that is a Multitude has come to answer you."

THE MAN THAT WAS A MULTITUDE

His head was in the heavens, though his feet were in the clay.
He rose against the smoke of stars we call the Milky Way.
Three hundred thousand oak-trees had furnished forth his staff;
And he waved his club above them, as a child might, with a laugh.
Saying,
"You have sung a strange song, in God's good land!
Who shall deliver you, or save you from my hand?

"O, you have sung a new song, but I will sing an old,
And it shall shine like rubies, and it shall ring like gold!
And you have sung the little songs of mating flea and flea;
But I will sing the great song that thunders like the sea;"
Roaring,

"You have sung the red grass, and hymned the purple cow;
And you have asked for justice! Will you kneel and have it now!"

"We're only Intellectuals," a tiny fiddler squeaked,
"It's not on such as us, you know, that judgment should be wreaked.
Why, even Mr. Trotsky says, we've hardly helped at all!
We only scratched the mortar out. We didn't smash the wall.
No! No!
We only thought the reign of law a very poor device.
We only asked for freedom, in a monkey's paradise."

The Man that was a Multitude, he dropped his mighty staff.
"Why, damn your little eyes," he said, "I'm only going to laugh."

Then, once, and twice, he guffawed, as a Sussex
ploughman might,
And the fiddlers and their fancies flew like
feathers thro' the night,
Whimpering,
*"Is it a Victorian Ghost? Some one that we
know?*
*Ecclefechan Tom himself—could hardly treat us
so!"*

As I came home by Arundel, my true love walked
with me,
And the Man that was a Multitude was singing
like the sea,—
*O, they have sung their green rose, and pickled it
in hell!*
*But we will sing the red rose that Adam used to
smell.*
And,
*They have sung their new love that veers with
heat and cold;*
*But we will sing the true love that never shall
grow old.*

THE RIDDLES OF MERLIN

TELL me, Merlin,—It is I
Who call thee, after a thousand Springs—
Tell me by what wizardry
The white foam wakes in whiter wings
Where surf and sea-gulls toss and cry
Like sister-flakes, as they mount and fly,
Flakes that the great sea flings on high,
To kiss each other and die.

Tell me, Merlin, tell me why
These delicate things that feast on flowers,
Red Admiral, brown fritillary,
Sister the flowers, yet sail the sky,
Frail ships that cut their cables, yet still fly
The colours we know them by.

Tell me, Merlin, tell me why,
The sea's chaotic colour grows
Into these rainbow fish whose Tyrian dye
In scales of gold and green reply

To blue-striped mackerel waves, to kelp-brown
caves,
And deep-sea blooms of gold and green and rose;
Why colours that the sea at random throws
Were ordered into this living harmony,
This little world, no bigger than the hand,
Gliding over the raw tints whence it came,
This opal-bellied patch of sand,
That floats above the sand, or darts a flame
Through woods of crimson lake, and flowers with-
out a name.
See all their tints around its body strewn
In planetary order. Sun, moon, star,
Are not more constant to their tune
Than those light scales of colour are;
Where each repeats the glory of his neighbour,
In the same pattern, with the same delight,
As if, without the artist's labour,
The palette of rich Chaos and old Night
Should spawn a myriad pictures, every line
True to the lost Designer's lost design.

Tell me, Merlin, for what eye
Gathers and grows this cosmic harmony?

Can sea-gulls feed, or fishes brood
On music fit for angels' food?
Did Nescience this delight create
To lure the conger to his mate?

If this be all that Science tells
The narrowest church may peal its bells,
And Merlin work new miracles;
While every dreamer, even as I,
May wonder on, until he die.

THE LAST OF THE SNOW

I

NOW, feathered with snow, the fir-tree's beautiful sprays
Pensively nod in the sun, while young April delays,—
Yes—yes—*we* know
How briefly our hearts with the light of the may-tide shall glow,
Ere the darkness of winter return; and the green boughs and gold
Shall all be choked down by the snow
In the end, as of old.

II

"Yes, white snow, you will have your revenge for the warm dreams that stir
In the sap of my boughs," said the wise old heart of the fir.
"None the less you shall go!

For my brother, the hawthorn, has dreamed of
a new kind of snow,
With honey for bees in its heart; and it's worth it,
I say,
Though you'll freeze us to death, as we know,
At the end of our day.

III

"There's a glory in fighting for dreams that are
doomed to defeat;
So perhaps it's because you'll return that the
bloom smells so sweet.
There's our victory, too,
Which you cannot prevent, for we're stronger
in one thing than you,
Since we win the one prize that's worth winning,
win heaven on earth;
And, if truth remain true,
Find in death our re-birth."

IV

So, feathered with snow, the beautiful boughs of
the fir

Dipped to the thaw of the world as the spring
touched them there;
And the lane, like a brook,
Sang in the sun, and the pretty girls came out
to look,
Saying, "Spring is begun! Look, look, how the
snow runs away!
It is only the snow on the fir-tree that seems to
delay!"

V

"That's true," said the fir, "and if only the wind
of the spring
Would whisper a tale that I know, or a black-
bird sing,
I think I might shake off this ghost!"—
"Oh, pouf! If that's all,"
Chuckled the spring-wind, "Listen! I think that's
the call
Of a black-bird! And what d'you suppose is that
other faint sound—
Snow melting?—leaves budding?—or young
lovers whispering all round,

In forest and meadow and city? Oh, yes, they've
begun!
Wake up! Tell that spectre to go!"
And the fir-tree listened and shook, and the last
of the snow
Slipped from its hold and plumped down on the
daffodil bed;
And the green-plumed branches danced for delight
in the sun;
And a black-bird alighted, at once, on the bright
wet boughs,
And called to his bright-eyed mate on the roof of
the shed,
*"O, see what a beautiful hiding-place for our
house!"*
—"That's better," the fir-tree said.

A SPRING HAT

DEAR Poet of the Sabine farm,
Whose themes, not all of blood and tears,
Beneath your happy trees could charm
Your lovers for a thousand years,
You would not blame a modern pen
For touching love with mirth again.

For Kit and I went up to town,
And Kit must choose a hat for Spring;
And, though the world may laugh it down,
There is no jollier theme to sing.
Ah, younger, happier than we knew
Into the fairy shop we flew.

Then she began to try them on.
The first one had a golden feather,
That like the godling's arrow shone
When first he pierced our hearts together.
"Now, what d'you think of that," she said,
Tilting it on her dainty head.

The next one, like a violet wreath
  Nestled among her fragrant hair;
But O, her shining eyes beneath,
  The while she tipped it here and there;
And said, with eager face aglow,
"How do you like it? So? Or so?"

The next one was an elfin crown.
  She wore it as Titania might.
She gave the glass a smile, a frown,
  And murmured, "No. It isn't *quite!*
I think that other one, the blue,—
Or no, perhaps the green,—don't you?"

Maidens, the haughtiest ever seen,
  Like willing slaves around her moved.
They tried the blue. They tried the green.
  They trembled when she disapproved;
And, when she waved the pink away,
They tried the lilac and the grey.

She perched the black upon her nose.
  She hid an eye behind the blue.

A SPRING HAT

She set the orange and the rose,
With subtle artistry, askew.
She stripped the windows of their store,
Then sent her slaves to search for more.

And while they searched . . . *O, happy face,*
Against the dark eternal night,
If I could paint you with the grace
The Master used! . . . A lovely light
Shone in the laughter of her eyes.
They glowed with sudden sweet surprise.

She saw—the very hat for Spring!
The first one, with the golden feather,
Dropt from a laughing angel's wing
Through skies of Paradisal weather.
She pinned it on her dainty head.
"This is the very thing," she said.

"Now, don't you like me?"—"Yes, I do,"
I said. The slaves were far away.
"Your eyes have never looked so blue."
"I mean the hat," she tried to say.

I kissed her. "Wait a bit," said she.
"There's just one more I want to see."

Who knows but, when the uproar dies,
And mightier songs are dead and gone,
Perhaps her laughing face may rise
Out of the darkness and live on,
If one—who loves—should read and say
This also happened, in that day.

A MEETING

WE met, last night.
His eyes were brimmed with light.
I knew him well.
I offered him my hand.
He did not seem to understand
The news I tried to tell.
He was so fresh from heaven, I supposed,
And I so scarred from hell.

I was the ghost,
Not he, of hopes long lost.
And he stood there,
My own lost youth, and looked
As if his radiant dreams rebuked
My load of barren care;
I had fulfilled so little, I supposed,
Of promises so fair.

And yet—and yet;
His eyes on mine were set
In a strange glory;

A MEETING

And kneeling at my feet
He whispered, as a child, simple and sweet
  Pleads for another story.
"Tell me," he said, "the wonders you have found,
  In worlds not transitory."

Then—then—I wept,
And fain I would have kept
  My tale untold,
But, since he knelt, I said
Bowing my head,
  "I have found that truth on earth is bought and
    sold;
And all the crowns that men desire are worth
  Only their weight in gold!"

"And is this all?"
—"Oh, no, this is not all!
  I found one light
That never has gone out.
Through all the darkest storms of doubt
  It burned as bright;
Yet this was not the glory that we dreamed of,
  This faint gleam in the night."

"Yet this must be
The light we longed to see
When prison-bars
Kept our hot boyhood fretting.
Tell me, of that far light which knew no setting
Through those disastrous wars."
He whispered low. I touched his golden head.
"Not far," I said, "but near;
The heaven we held so dear
Shone from our father's house; one lonely light
More constant than the stars."

THE ISLE OF MEMORIES

WAS it so in Old England, when kings went to war?
Did the cottages grow silent, as the lads went away,
Leaving all they loved so, the wan face of the mother,
The lips of the young wives, the grey head and the golden,
While birds, in the blackthorn, made ready for the May?

It was even so, even so in Old England.
The homesteads were emptied of happiness and laughter.
The fields were forsaken. The lanes grew lonely.
A shadow veiled the sun. A sea-mist of sorrows
Drifted like a dream through the old oak-forests,
Flowed through our valleys, and filled them with visions,

Brooded on our mountains and crowned them with remembrance,
So that many a wanderer from the shining of the West
Finds a strange darkness in the heart of our land.
Long, long since, in the days of the cross-bow,
Unknown armies from the forge and the farm,
Bought us these fields in the bleakness of death.
The May-boughs budded with the same brief glory;
And, sweetening all the air, in a shower of wet petals,
The black-bird shook them, with to-day's brave song.
His note has not changed since the days of Piers Plowman.
The star has not changed that, as curfew chimed,
In the faint green fields of the sky, like a primrose
Woke, and looked down, upon lovers in the lanes.

Their wild thyme to-night shall be crushed into sweetness,

On the crest of the downs where, dark against the crimson,
Dark, dark as death, on the crimson of the after-glow,
Other lovers wander, on the eve of fare-well,
Other lovers whisper and listen to the sea.

It was even so, even so in Old England.
In all this bleak island, there is hardly an acre,
Hardly a gate, or a path upon the hillside,
Hardly a woodland, that has not heard or seen them
Whispering good-bye, or waving it for ever.
This rain-drenched, storm-rocked earth we adore,
These ripening orchards, these fields of thick wheat
Rippling into grey light and shadow as the wind blows;
These dark rich ploughlands, dreaming in the dusk,
Whose breath in our nostrils is better than life;
This isle of green hedge-rows and deep rambling lanes;

This cluster of old counties that have mellowed
through the ages,
Like apples in autumn on a grey apple-tree;
Those moorlands of Cornwall, those mountains
of Cumberland,
Ferny coombs of Devonshire and gardens of
Kent;
Those russet roofs of Sussex, those farms and
faint spires,
Those fields of known flowers, whose faces, whose
fragrance,
Even in this darkness, recall our lost childhood,
Sleep like our own children, and cherish us like
angels,—
All these are ours, because of the forgotten.

BEAUTY IN DARKNESS

BEAUTY in darkness,
Ivory-white
Sleeps like the secret
Heart of the night.

Night may be boundless,
Formless as death,
Here the white-breasted one
Still draws breath.

Music that vanished
At eve, on the air,
Silently slumbers
Till day-break here.

Here, at the heart
Of my universe, glows
Exquisite, absolute,
Love's deep rose.

HOUSE-HUNTING

I CAME on a house in Sussex,
That I should like to own,
A house of old black oak-beams,
And a roof of Horsham stone,
With beautiful stains of lichen
And golden browns o'er-grown.

And a deep age-ripened garden,
As peaceful as the dead,
With a warm grey wall around it
Where peach and pear might spread,
And a mulberry-tree, and a dial;
And roses, white and red.

And over the wall, to the southward,
The roofs of a gabled town,
In a glory of mellowing colour,
Russet and gold and brown;
And, over the wall to the westward,
The church on the naked down.

And over the wall to the northward,
An orchard, fruitful and fair,
With white doves wheeling above it
On the rose-red evening air;
And I thought that my quest was ended,
And dreamed of my new songs there.

But, over the wall to the eastward,
The devil that darkens the sun
Had builded his big new barracks
And ruined what Time had done,
And put out the eyes of beauty
Or ever the song was begun.

So now I must back to London,
And live in a flat, I suppose,
While over earth's loveliest island
The army of villa-dom grows,
In well-drilled regular regiments
And horrible red-brick rows.

For it isn't enough, in our blindness,
That we cannot make new things fair;

But, wherever the old touch lingers
In anything Time can spare,
We must crush it and grind it to powder
And set our heel on it there.

Ah, if I had money to buy it
I would tear their new curse down,
And plant me another orchard
In the face of the Mayor's black frown,
And make my songs in a garden
In the heart of that old-world town.

A BALLAD OF THE EASIER WAY

"ENOUGH of toil," I heard the sculptor cry.
"Why should my passionate soul in chains be led?
Away with smooth conventions! I'll not try
To wrest my Venus from her marble bed.
Let her be buried deep, from foot to head,
In rough-hewn rock, with one toe peeping through.
Suggestion is the finer art," he said;
And, by the by, it looked much easier, too.

"My lady's face," I heard the painter sigh,
"Was mauve as grass, the day that we were wed;
Her shape (she doesn't paint, and can't reply)
Was rambling, like a shell-shocked cattle-shed.
Her fists were like two dimpled rolls of bread;
And, though one eye was green, and one was blue,

I found it took less time to paint them red!"
And, by the by, it looked much easier, too.

I saw the proud composer stand on high.
I heard a shriek that filled my soul with dread,
A wail of tortured cats that clawed the sky,
A chatter of monkeys clamouring to be fed!
Then, as those awful arms arose and spread
I heard a voice—"It's absolutely *New!*
He wastes no time on melody!"—I fled;
For, by the by, it sounded easier, too.

Envoy

Poets, that on Parnassus' height would tread,
With those that sing, beware the formless crew.
You can be free and formless when you're dead;
Though, even to-night, you'd find it easier, too.

CUBISM

I HAVE laughed, but seen it,—under Ditchling
Down,
Blue cubes, yellow cubes, crimson cubes and
brown.
I have laughed, but seen it,—shouting at the sky,
Crazy as a crazy quilt, over Telscombe Tye:

Cubes of russet plowland, greying in the sun,
Cubes of honeyed clover, red as blood could
run,
Cubes of yellow mustard, clean as hammered gold,
Bleating cubes of clouds or sheep, crammed
into a fold.

Clinging to the Sussex downs,—did we crawl like
flies?
Ask the proud Antipodes towering to their
skies.
I have laughed and seen it, solid in the sun,
All the myriad planes of earth, blocked and
wedged in one;

CUBISM

Solid as your flesh and bones, blocked with bits
of sea,
Squared with dusky semi-tones, and cubed with
mystery,
Planes of Anglo-Saxon art, planes of modern
mirth,
From an aeroplane above—or below—the
earth.

Butting through the solid blue like a submarine;
While my eyelids clung to cubes of blue and
gold and green,
Till the level meadows rose, upright to the sky,
And we looped the loop again, over Telscombe
Tye.

A DEVONSHIRE SONG

IN Devonshire now they sing no more
At market or fair or plough.
There are no deep cider-songs to roar
In the red-earth country now.
The roofs are slate instead of thatch
And the tall young lads are gone.
You may pull the bobbin and lift the latch,
But the old farm-dance is done.

Yet the blackbird sings in the old apple-tree
As in Uncle Tom Cobley's day;
And snow—white snow—in a Devonshire night,
Is only the bloom on the spray.
There'll be pocket-fulls, bag-fulls, barn-fulls yet,
When the ships come home from say.
For a good cob-wall, and a good hat and shoes,
And a good heart last for aye.

They say that love's more fickle of wing
Than it was in the days gone by;

But a Devonshire lane dives deep in the spring,
  Ere it lifts through the fern to the sky.
As it was in the days of good Queen Bess
  It shall be in the age to come,
When the sweet of the year's in the cider-press,
  And the whistling maid turns home.

For the south wind comes, and it brings wet weather,
  And the west is cloaked with grey,
And a whistling maid and a crowing hen
  Are wicked as frost in May;
But snow—white snow—in a Devonshire night,
  Is only the bloom on the spray,
And a good cob-wall, and a good hat and shoes,
  And a good heart last for aye.

They say that Devon has fought her fight,
  They say that she, too, grows old.
But the wind blew south upon New Year's night
  And the moon had a ring of gold:
And a dripping June puts all in tune
  For harvest, as well we know;

A DEVONSHIRE SONG

So here's to thee, old apple-tree,
Thou'lt bear good apples enow.

There were apples to spare for the Golden Hinde,
When she sailed from Plymouth Bay;
And, though Widdecombe folk be picking their geese,
There'll be apples to spare to-day;
For snow—white snow—in a Devonshire night,
Is only the bloom on the spray,
And a good cob-wall, and a good hat and shoes,
And a good heart last for aye.

A DEVONSHIRE CHRISTMAS

I

HOW goes it, Father Christmas?—
Oh—picking—picking along!
But give me a piece of crumple-cheese
And you shall hear my song.
Ay, settle your chestnuts down to roast,
And fill me a cup of ale;
Then kiss the girl that you fancy most,
And you shall hear my tale.

Chorus.

Froth him a cup of the home-brewed
That is both old and strong!
How goes it, Father Christmas?—
Oh—picking—picking along.

II

From Adam and Eve to the Magi,
The ghosts of the old time fade;

And I, myself, would be laid on the shelf
  If it weren't for the mirth I've made:
And yet, tho' our youth in Paradise
  Be a fable past recall,
We have seen the glory of sinless eyes,
  And we have watched the Fall.

Chorus.

So fables may be fancies,
  And yet not very far wrong!
How goes it, Father Christmas?
  Oh—picking—picking along!

III

I walked last night on Dartmoor,
  The wind was bitterly cold,
My crimson cloak was a thread-bare joke,
  And my bones were brittle and old.
I had forgotten the world's desire
  And all the stars were dead,
When I sank right up to my knees in mire,
  At the door of a cattle-shed.

Chorus.

I saw the oldest oxen
That ever knew goad or thong;
Their sweet breath smoked in the frosty light
Of the lanthorn that I swung.

IV

I saw those oxen kneeling,
So gentle and dumb and wise,
By a child that lay in the straw and smiled
At their big dark shining eyes!
While a woman breathed *"lullay, lullay,"*
The Magi need not roam
So long ago, so far away,
When heaven is born at home.

Chorus.

Then all my heart sang "Gloria"
I lacked no angel throng,
As over the lonely moor I went,
Picking, picking along.

V

And over the farm on the whistling fells
I saw the great star glide;
And "Peace on earth" rang Modbury bells,
And Ermington bells replied.
How goes it, Father Christmas?
Was the burden of all their song;
And what could a Devonshire pedlar say
But "Picking—picking along."

Chorus.

He needs a cloak and a pair of shoes,
But his heart is young and strong!
How goes it, Father Christmas?
Oh—picking—picking along.

THE BRIDE-ALE

A Man.

WHICH is the way that the barn-dance goes?

A Maid.

First stand up in two straight rows.

A Man.

Every Jack must face his Jill.

The Music.

Whether he won't or whether he will.

A Maid.

What is the song that shall be sung?

The Music.

A tale of a wedding when all was young.

A Man.

How shall the dance and the song begin?

The Music.

Hands across, and down the middle!

THE BRIDE-ALE

A Maid.

Bring the bride and the bridegroom in.

A Man.

Now, then, fiddler! Talk to your fiddle!

Chorus of Bride's-maids.

Dew—dew—on the wild hill-side,
Dew on the thyme and the clover,
And we are coming to busk the bride
In the great red dawn, with the sky-lark carolling,
Carolling, carolling over.

The dew is bright on the red hill-brow,
Although the sun be spreading;
So we must walk in our bare feet now,
And save our shoes—with the sky-lark carolling—
Save our shoes for the wedding.

Dew—dew—and a song to be sung so.
Dew—dew—and a peal to be rung so.
Dew—dew—and the world growing young, so
Early in the morning!

THE BRIDE-ALE

The cows are crunching flowers and dew,
  Their long blue shadows are dwining.
Their hooves are gold with the butter-cup dust
  (There's gold, wet gold on your ankles, too)
And their coats like silk are shining.

Dew—dew—and a dance in the spray of it.
Dew—dew—and a light in the gray of it.
Dew—dew—and a bride in the way of it,
Waking at dawn to be married.

Now, quick with the jassamine crown for her head!
  Too long, my dear, you've tarried;
And I hope that we all may blush so red
On the day that we walk—with the sky-lark carolling—
  Walk through the dew to be married.

It is only an English song we sing
  For O, we know no Latin!
But your shoulder is shaped like a sea-bird's wing,
Milk-white in the wave of your tumbling tresses
  And soft as a queen's white satin.

Medea used wild herbs, they say
To tangle the heart of Jason.
We bring three pails of the dew of the May,
Dew of the white-thorn, dew of the black-thorn,
Dew of the wild thyme, dew of the lavender,
Dew of the ox-lip, clover, and marigold,
Dew that we wrung with our hands from the meadow-sweet
To pour into your bason.

Dew—dew—and a song to be sung so.
Dew—dew—and a peal to be rung so.
Dew—dew—and the world growing young, so
Come, sweet May, to be married.

A Bride's-maid.

This dance it will no further go.

The Music.

I pray you, madam, why say you so?

A Bride's-maid.

Because Joan Hedges begins to repent.

The Music.

She can't repent, and she shan't repent.
Love in the hedge-rows laughs at Lent.

Chorus of Groom's-men.

The muscadine waits for the bride at the church.
  Lead her along to the aisle.
Parson is waiting to hop on his perch,
  And sexton is trying to smile.
Parson is waiting (though Adam and Eve
  Kissed without asking his pardon)
To shepherd the two into Eden anew
  And give 'em the keys of the garden.

Quick, let the gown that is white as the Spring's,
  All in array for the fray,
Drift like the mist of the dawn as it clings
  Hiding the bloom of the May.
Fasten it there, on her shoulder, but O,
  Joan, if you shrug it or falter
Now, you'll be married in roses and snow;
  So quick, come along to the altar.

A Groom's-man.

This dance it will no further go.

The Music.

I pray you, good sir, why say you so?

A Groom's-man.

Because John Appleby's half afraid.

The Music.

And that's no answer to make to a maid.

A Groom's-man.

What shall we do? He is shivering still.

The Music.

Parson 'ull preach, on the text *Aprille.*

The Parson.

The love-songs that the Frenchmen pipe
I never could long abide.
They are all too curious or too ripe
To troll at the hawthorn-tide.
As for those *Epithalamions*
Which learned poets sing,
Their Phyllidariddles and Corydons—
They have well-nigh spoiled the Spring.

Hymen—the God that rules the roast,
As master Shakespeare knew,
They have turned to a turnip-lanthorn ghost,
And a thumping hypocrite, too.
For either they whisper with tongues like snakes
Of a secret purple sin;
Or else they are burning the hawthorn brakes
And welcoming old age in.

What do they know of the song Love sings,
  Passion, or music's beat,
Who wish to dance with feet like wings,
  Yet cannot steer their feet?
For life's a dance, and none has known
  It's pulsing rapturous breath,
Who dances unto himself alone
  And never vowed—*till death.*

General Chorus

The sermon is over and now you may kiss,
  Kiss, without asking for pardon.
The cherubs are swinging the gates of your bliss
  Wide upon Paradise garden.
Spikenard, saffron, cinnamon, blow,
  Blow through the beautiful boughs there.
Solomon said it (to Sheba, you know)
  And Sheba—why, *she* had a house there.

Dew—dew—and a dance in the spray of it.
Dew—dew—and a light in the gray of it.
Dew—dew—and a bride in the way of it,
  Waking at dawn to be married.

THE UNCHANGING

I

"All songs are sung, numbered all flowers," they said,
"In some unearthly far-off isle—who knows?—
Perchance the unvisited lyric blossom blows
Whence all that primal lustre is not fled
Nor dimmed the ambrosial dew that crowned its birth
Where the pure fourfold river of Eden flows."
Then, since my soul was living and not dead,
Through a lych-gate I went into a grave-yard,
And, for the first, yet millionth, time on earth,
I saw—thank God—the rose!

II

"The world is changed"—unchanged the blue heaven smiled—
"Truth is not Truth, Love is not Love," they said,

"Laughter and Joy in their simplicity
Lie dead beneath yon old patched robe, the sea!
Gird up your loins, run swifter than the wind,
It may be we shall leave yon old blue heaven behind!"
Then, since my soul was living and not dead,
I went into a great miraculous meadow,
And laughed, with a little child.

BEAUTIFUL ON THE BOUGH

BEAUTIFUL on the bough
The song-thrush in summer-time
Carelessly sings.

Beautiful under the bough
The silent thrush in winter-time
Lies with stiffened wings.

Who, ah, who, shall sing or say
Why there comes to careless-hearted joy
A thing so still and great as death?

If the gods feared that happiness would cloy,
Surely a slighter sadness would repay
That little debt,

That debt of harmless gladness!
Why must the lightest creature that draws breath
Go down this tragic way,

Assume the awful majesty of a fate
Worthy a god; if it were not . . God, Christ,
Return, return, Compassionate,

We have rejected Thee,
Who saidst that not one should be sacrificed,
We have rejected Thee, but not the fact,

This terrible naked fact, which if it be
Unanswered, blackens earth and sky and sea . .
This tiny body, mocking the blind sun,
Postulates Thy divine philosophy,
Not one shall fall to the earth, not one, not one.

AS WE FORGIVE

BEFORE Thy children, Lord, were fully grown,
They bowed like suppliants at their Maker's throne
And prayed, like slaves, that mercy might be shown.

They knelt before Thee, pleading in the night,
That Thou wouldst wash their scarlet raiment white.
Now, in the dawn, at last they stand upright.

Not with irreverent hearts, yet unafraid,
The silent, helpless myriads Thou hast made,
Give Thee the gifts for which, of old, they prayed:

Compassion for the burden Thou must bear;
And, though they know not why these evils were,
Their mute forgiveness for the griefs they share.

AS WE FORGIVE

Yes, for one human grief that still must be
Too sad for heaven, too tragical for Thee,
Who even in death wast sure of victory;

For those farewells that darken our brief day,
The child struck down, the young love torn away,
And those dear hopes that kiss us to betray;

For perishing youth, for beauty's fading eyes;
For all Thyself hast given us in such wise
That, ere we grasp its loveliness, it dies,

Dies and despite our faith, we are not sure.
Our love, oh God, was never so secure
As Thine, in Thy strong heaven which must endure.

So, in our human weakness, for the scorn
And scourging, for the bitter cross of thorn
That this dark earth, from age to age has borne,

We—Thy clay creatures—warped and marred and blind,
Stretch out our arms at last, and bid Thee find
Rest to Thy soul, in crucified mankind.

Come to us! Leave Thy deathless realms on high.
We tell Thee, as our dumb dark myriads die,
We do absolve Thee, with our last sad cry.

THE MAKING OF A POEM

LAST night a passionate tempest shook his soul
With hatred and black anger and despair,
And the dark depths and every foaming shoal
Ran wild as if they fought with the blind air.

To-day the skies unfold their flags of blue,
The crisp white clouds their sails of snow unfurl,
And, on the shore, in colours rich and new
The strange green seas cast up their loosened pearl.

TO AN "UNPRACTICAL MAN"

NO—no—the cynics rule, for all our creeds.
Dreams are vain dreams, and deeds are brutal deeds.
Why should they hear you, who have never heard?
How should you triumph where gods have striven in vain,
How break with your weak hands the world-wide chain?
Were not the chained souls first to mock your word?

Yet—since you must—work out the old sad plan.
Prove, once again, the bounds God set for man.
Strive for your dream of good and watch it die.
Fail utterly; but O, welcome that defeat,
For there—as this world fades—you, too, shall meet
In absolute night, the eyes of Victory.

CHRISTMAS, 1919

CHRISTMAS, and peace on earth; an Eastern tale
Of shepherds and a star,—
Can these things, in our mocking age, avail
A world grown old in war?

Since Galileo opened up a night
Too deep for hope to scan,
The starry heavens no longer wheel their light
To serve the need of man.

There are no wings in that unfathomed gloom,
Where now our eyes behold,
World without end, and orderly as doom,
The mist of suns unfold.

Yet, to fulfil, not to destroy the law,
The modern mages rose;
And, round the deeper centre that they saw,
A vaster cosmos flows.

CHRISTMAS, 1919

Oh, for a Galileo of the mind
To pierce this inner night;
And, deeper than our deepest dreams, to find
The light beyond our light;

Where angels sing, though not to the fleshly ear,
As over Bethlehem's Inn.
Turn to thine own deep soul, if thou wouldst hear.
The Kingdom is within.

Eternal Lord, in whom we live and move;
Whose face we cannot see;
Soul of the Universe, whose names are Love,
And Law, and Liberty;

Confirm our peace! There is no peace on earth,
No song in our dark skies.
Only in souls the Christ is brought to birth,
And there He lives and dies.

DISTANT VOICES

REMEMBER the house of thy father,
When the palaces open before thee,
And the music would make thee forget.
When the cities are glittering around thee,
Remember the lamp in the evening,
The loneliness and the peace.

When the deep things that cannot be spoken
Are drowned in a riot of laughter,
And the proud wine foams in thy cup;
In the day when thy wealth is upon thee,
Remember thy path through the pine-wood,
Remember the ways of thy peace.

Remember—remember—remember—
When the cares of this world and its treasure
Have dulled the swift eyes of thy youth;
When beauty and longing forsake thee,
And there is no hope in the darkness,
And the soul is drowned in the flesh;

Turn, then, to the house of thy boyhood,
To the sea and the hills that would heal thee,
To the voices of those thou hast lost,
The still small voices that loved thee,
Whispering, out of the silence,
Remember—remember—remember—

Remember the house of thy father,
Remember the paths of thy peace.

FOR A BOOK OF TALES

IF there be laughter, here and there, in a story
Written when songs were dead, in a dreadful hour;
Remember, at least, that men may laugh in the darkness
Where tears are not to be borne.

O, if there be any beguilement in these my shadows
Caught—as they walked the world—in a net of dreams;
Remember, at least, that the best of all my music
Was this—that my songs were dead.

If there be tragical shadows walking amongst them,
The darkest shadow of all has merciful hands;
And whispers—low in your heart—O, yet remember,
That shadows are children of light.

So—take them, walking their ways as I saw and drew them,
Shadows from British coasts and from over the sea,
From Sussex to Maine, from Maine to the City of Angels,
Whence the sunset returns as the dawn.

A SKY SONG

THE Devil has launched his great grey craft
To voyage in the sky;
But Life puts out with a thousand wings,
To rake His Majesty fore and aft
And prove that Wrong must die.

So has it been since time began,—
When Death would mount and fly,
A swifter fleet, with sharper stings,
Round him in lightning circles ran
And proved that Death must die.

Invincible, he came of old.
His galleons towered on high;
But Drake and his companions bold
And this proud sea that laughs and sings
Declared that Death must die.

So all these four free winds declare
And these pure realms of sky;
And these new admirals of the air,
Ay, Life with all her radiant wings
Declares that Death must die.

A RETURN FROM THE AIR

SET the clocks going,
Turn on the light.
Is that the old sea flowing
Out there, in the night?
We have come back from faërie,
To the world where Time still plods.
We have returned from an airy
Ramble with the gods.

There are few changes showing.
The fire shines bright.
But—set the clocks going.
Turn on the light.
No, we have nothing to tell you
That you would care to be told.
No, we have nothing to sell you
That ever was bought with gold.

Ah, never look at our faces
Till we forget our skies,

Or the gleam of the holy places
  Has faded from our eyes.
But—set the clocks going.
  Turn on the light,
Outside the winds are blowing.
  Shut the doors tight.

Is it an age or a minute
  That we have been away?
We have lived an æon in it,
  That is all we dare to say.
Our knowledge was past all knowing.
  Our seeing was past all sight.
But—set the clocks going.
  Turn on the light.

COURT-MARTIAL

ALL along the lovers' lane
Nelly Cobb and I went laughingly.
When I kissed her,—"Do't again,"
So she'd say, pert-like and chaffingly.

It was moonlight, and we walked
Whispering of the bliss in store for us
Little dreamed I, as we talked,
That the future held no more for us.

Round and rosy chin held high,
Buckled shoes and gown of tiffany,
"Banns 'ull soon be up," thought I,
"We'll be married next epiphany!"

Then the war came, wiping out
All the course that Love had charted us.
Germany was wrong, no doubt.
Well, I 'listed, and that parted us.

COURT-MARTIAL

Now, at dawn, they'll shoot me dead,
  Since my nerve, before the enemy,
Broke, as the court-martial said,
  (Wonder if she'll think agen o' me!)

I was just a volunteer.
  Now she'll marry Joe, no doubt of it.
He's there—striking. Life is queer.
  Did my best, and now I'm out of it.

How Joe grinned the day I went,
  Called me fool, and stood, saluting me.
P'raps I was. I thought it meant
  Something—better. Well, they're shooting me.

All this happened in one flash!
  Sight may go, and who thinks less of you?
But, by God, if nerves go crash
  When your pal's blood makes a mess of you.

Then God leaves you in the lurch.
  Weakness there is worse than knavery.
Joke 'ull be at home, in church,
  When the vicar lauds my bravery.

COURT-MARTIAL

None will know how I was killed.
I'll be mentioned as heroical;
Nelly 'ull cry, and say she's thrilled.
Husband Joe will sit there, stoical.

Life's a funny kind of play.
All the love and hope and youth of it,—
Chucked like so much dirt away;
And there's no one knows the truth of it.

A VICTORY DANCE

THE cymbals crash,
And the dancers walk,
With long silk stockings
And arms of chalk,
Butterfly skirts,
And white breasts bare,
And shadows of dead men
Watching 'em there.

Shadows of dead men
Stand by the wall,
Watching the fun
Of the Victory Ball.
They do not reproach,
Because they know,
If they're forgotten,
It's better so.

Under the dancing
Feet are the graves.

A VICTORY DANCE

Dazzle and motley,
In long bright waves,
Brushed by the palm-fronds
Grapple and whirl
Ox-eyed matron,
And slim white girl.

Fat wet bodies
Go waddling by,
Girdled with satin,
Though God knows why;
Gripped by satyrs
In white and black,
With a fat wet hand
On the fat wet back.

See, there is one child
Fresh from school,
Learning the ropes
As the old hands rule.
God, how that dead boy
Gapes and grins
As the tom-toms bang
And the shimmy begins.

"What did you think
We should find," said a shade,
"When the last shot echoed
And peace was made?"
"Christ," laughed the fleshless
Jaws of his friend,
"I thought they'd be praying
For worlds to mend;"

"Making earth better,
Or something silly,
Like white-washing hell
Or Picca-dam-dilly.
They've a sense of humour,
These women of ours,
These exquisite lilies,
These fresh young flowers!"

"Pish," said a statesman
Standing near,
"I'm glad they can busy
Their thoughts elsewhere!
We mustn't reproach 'em.
They're young, you see."

A VICTORY DANCE

"Ah," said the dead men,
"So were we!"

Victory! Victory!
On with the dance!
Back to the jungle
The new beasts prance!
God, how the dead men
Grin by the wall,
Watching the fun
Of the Victory Ball.

THE RHYTHM OF LIFE

COME back, to the tidal sun,"
The Angel of Morning said.
"There are no more songs to be won
From the sad new pulseless dead;
But the pine-wood throbs with the truth
It sang to the heart of a boy!
Come back, to the hills of youth,
Enjoyer and giver of joy.

"Come back, to the tidal sea
And its great storm-guiding tune,
By the service of law set free
To sing with the sun and the moon;
To pulse with the blood and the breath,
And to ebb ere the flow can cloy,
In the rhythm of life and death,
Enjoyer and giver of joy."

THE ROLL OF HONOR

I

HOW could she know that these tremendous things
Could all be printed in so small a space?
The headlines flared with footlight queens and kings
And left her dead to his obscurer place.

The line of print that turned her heart to stone,—
How should it vie with knaves or fools for fame?
Let the world pass. Her grief was all her own;
And of the world she had no care or claim.

Why was he slaughtered, then, since no soul cared,
Except herself, whether he lived or died;
Or those that dug some later trench and bared
The old white bones, and had to turn aside.

Bones that were clothed with living flesh of old,
Bones that were hands, and had her hands to hold.

II

Yet when that Roll of Honor told her first,
In midget print, how all those heroes died,
Though her brain reeled and heart was like to burst,
She heard, she too, the trumpets of their pride.

It seemed as if, with peace, they would return
Like boys from football, shouting "Four to three."
Then, as time passed, slowly she came to learn
How strangely silent all those dead could be.

For this was not like stories in a book;
Not like the fifth act of some splendid play;
This, this thing was for ever. . . . Her soul shook
And stared in terror down that endless way.

Good News! Oh, yes; but, shivering through their cry
She only heard and breathed Good-bye! Good-bye!

III

At least, she thought, in face of all these dead,
Mankind would wipe the old lies from heart and brain,
Set a firm heel on those false things we said,
And never rant of earth's rewards again.

Had honor time to count the hosts that stream
So simply through this darkness, down to death?
Heroes lie dumb, while, like an idiot's dream,
Painted balloons dance on the popular breath.

For the bawd Glory crowns with blood-drenched flowers
The first her eyes can seize, rarely the true.
The rest must fade, those nameless hosts of ours,
The obscure brave that never claim their due.

They fade. They fade, for all our shrines and scrolls.
There's no reward for gods, except their souls.

IV

Good News! Good News! He perished for the
right.
Ah, but to die, an atom in the flood
That tramples myriads down into the night
And drenches half the earth with boyish blood!

Where is the right to heal this deeper wrong,
If night eternal hide the soul that gave;
If silence close the discord, and not song
And death drag life behind him like a slave?

If but one child be wronged, one love go down,
That fools to come may clutch an idler dream,
Justice may drop her sword and play the clown,
Her court's a mockery in this cosmic scheme.

There is no truth, no cause, no aim secure,
If best things die, while stocks and stones endure.

TO CERTAIN PHILOSOPHERS

AFTER all the dreaming, the laughter and the tears,
Comes a tramp of armies, a shock of naked spears.

After all the loving, with lips and eyes a-light,
Comes the iron slumber, and the endless night.

After all the singing, and all that souls can pray,
Comes the empty silence, closing all with *Nay;*

After all the 'progress,' the day when all is told,
When the stars are darkened, and the sun is cold.

Ah, my latter sophists, if your creed were true,
Gods, if gods existed, well might kneel to you.

You have found the one thing that gods have never heard;
Found what hell despaired of, found the final word.

A CHANT OF THE AGES

INTO the darkness, trample the cross and the martyr's crown.
Crush the faith of your fathers down to the night's deep maw.
Tell us the soul is a shadow, tell us that love is a dream.
Tell us the world is helmless, a-drift in a measureless gloom!
Rave in the self-same breath of your 'progress,'—down to your doom.
Progress down to the darkness, a blind implacable stream,—
Progress of planets and suns, whirled thro' a moment of law,
Out of the lawless into the lawless. Trample them down.

Mock! And we will out-mock you—whirl you hence like a wave!

Mock, for the night is upon you. Climb now, climb to your height.
Look on the glory of man in the light of the dying sun.
You that have darkened the heavens for those that had only their faith,
Mock, and we will out-mock you! Mock, O, wraith of a wraith!
What? You have progress to sell, in a hell where such horrors are done.
Mock, O gluttons of death, for the night is upon you, the night!
How shall you elbow the rest of us out of our home in the grave?

Mock, and we will out-mock you. You have heaped dust on your youth,
Blinded the eyes of the simple, and juggled with words for an hour!
Mock! For the ages are moving against you like waves of the deep.
Mock, for the stars overhead in the depths of the night conspire—
Legions of orderly forces, chariots of pitiless fire,

Marching against you, marching so swiftly, they seem but to sleep;
Till, as you mock them, on heights beyond height, beyond thought, the legions of truth
Plant the unshakeable flags of the Kingdom, the Glory, the Power.

How shall you measure or think of them, in the same breath as you say
They are beyond all thought, unknowable? You who confess
This was the ground of your doubting—that all men are utterly blind!
Doubt not the ground of your doubting—that these things are greater than you,
Greater than even your Art, greater than even you knew,
Greater than even your flesh, greater than even your mind,
Greater than all that was born of them, greater, not less, not less,
Even than man, or the brute, or the slime, where your thought runs dwindling away.

Have not your sophisters told us that God is a
blundering force
Groping in vain for the vision that shines in the
mind of a fool?
What, you are flogging the dead little anthro-
pomorphic creeds?
Where is your creed to replace them? At least
they climbed to a height,
And you say that your God crawls blindly, a dumb
blind creature of night,
Crawls out of Nothingness, counts upon Time
to repair His misdeeds!
O, Thou Timeless, Infinite, bowing Thy head in
remorse,
Learn at the feet of a mountebank, come, and
be patient in school.

O, Thou Unknowable, Infinite . . . Have we not
heard of a dream
Made in the heart of a man, yet something
deeper than this,
Made in the mind of a man, that exulted even
in pain,

Knowing that Death was a gate thro' the narrower limits of Life,
So that he stood up and cried, triumphant because of the strife,
Crowned and girdled with peace, cried to the Day-Spring again,
Glory to God in the Highest, in an agony better than bliss,
One with the Godhead at last, in the Passion, the Vision Supreme.

This was a little vision. Trample it utterly down;
But where is your dream to replace it, and what have your visions unfurled?
New Things! Bones and a skull, under the skin of a man!
Mock, and we will out-mock you, for term by contemptible term,
You have denied and degraded all that the noblest affirm;
God into force, man into beast. Is this the new law that we scan,—
The greater evolved by the less? And you wear the philosopher's crown!

Ours was a Universe, inner and outer, yes, ours was the world.
It is the world you would shatter—the world where children are born.
It is the world you would shatter, where wise men kneel at their feet.
It is the world you would shatter, where Life is crucified still.
When you rebelled in the darkness, against this Passion and Love,
It was no dream you would shatter, this creed of the Snake and the Dove!
Would you reject it, because of the pain it embraces? O, crooked of will,
It is the world around you, palpable, bitter and sweet,
And the scorn of the ages laughs your rebellion to scorn.

Either not good you have called Him, or else of a less than All-Might.
It was the bonds you would break, in whose service alone you are free.

Asking for laws that are lawless, it is Creation you hate,
Chiding your bounds as a river that chides at the banks where it flows.
Would you have blood without veins, and a road that returns ere it goes?
Would you paint pictures, in gold upon gold, with a shadowless light?
It is a prayer that unprays its own praying, a prayer uncreate,
Asking for nought. It is you that have failed in the prayer, and not He.

Though you reject it in Adam, you cannot reject it in Man.
Though you reject it in Heaven, you cannot reject it on Earth,
Here, it is here at your door, though you turn from the ultimate fount,
It is this world you would shatter! You strut with your scraps and your shards,
Epigrammatical sophists, and mad little pessimist bards,

Proffering new things, little soiled scraps from
that feast on the Mount,
Soddened in Soho cafés, and end where your
fathers began,
End in miraculous dust, which—you say—had a
virginal birth.

Born of Fashion—that Virgin—born in the ful-
ness of Time,
Cradled in Nothingness, nourished by accident,
ages ago
Slumbered an embryo, holding within it . . .
I speak as a fool . . .
London, Paris, and Rome, the streets and the
lights and the roar.
Nothing was yet to be seen but a jellyfish, flat on
the shore
Yes—there was doubtless a shore, for the earth
was beginning to cool;
So it had doubtless been hot, which implies, as
philosophers know,
Nothing at all; though London, and Paris, and
Rome, were implied in its slime;

So were Socrates, Dante, Shakespeare, Kant and the rest.
Water may clamour for water. But souls in a void were implied.
There was nothing before them equal at all to themselves,—
Only the rapidly cooling earth as it rolled on its way.
Then the pageant began, and slowly marched to the day,
Till, in the fulness of time, there shone on the wild sea-shelves
Thousands of jelly-fish, left by the tide. There was doubtless a tide.
That was the life-force, blundering blindly, with law in its breast.

O, the miraculous world, when the sun sank over the sea;
O, the colours, the rainbows that shone on that desolate shore,
Nursing your limitless 'progress,' under the dawn of the moon,

Waiting—under the stars—for the birth of a world of tears.
Close your eyes on the vision. Sleep for a billion years,
Then open your eyes and behold it, a Cross and a night in your noon,
And a voice ringing and crying, for ever and evermore,
Eloi! Eloi! Eloi! Lama Sabacthani!

Close your eyes on the vision. Sleep but one æon away.
Open your eyes in the darkness; for death has laid hold on the sun.
See where it hangs, a red ember, and earth is colder than death.
There is no relic of man, no ruin, not even a tomb,
Only the ice and the snow and the deep green measureless gloom,
Mocked by the cold white stars; and listen, one terrible breath
Shuddering out of the Void, like the moan of a spirit astray—

"Sleep, O cities, O nations, the last long night is begun."
Mock, and we will out-mock you, for now to this end are ye come,
Mock, for we are the ages, and we that were old are still young.
Where are your tricks and your fashions, your cries of the day and the hour.
Sleep, O terrible cities, your wars are accomplished at last.
All your conquests are conquered. All your "progress" is past.
Have we not travailed together and brought forth Glory and Power?
Where are the mighty cathedrals that rocked to the psalms that we sung?
Is even your Art not immortal? And the shallow mouth, is it dumb?

No—let us whisper together; for we that were old are still young.
We are the endless ages. We shall not labour in vain.

Out of our groaning together who knows but
a god may be born?
Ah, speak low, we have time, and infinite time,
for that end.
Infinite time we have spent, nor diminished the
store that we spend.
Were there no God in the past, we still move
to a deepening morn,
And, in the gates of the future, He waits, till a
harvest be sprung
Out of the worlds upon worlds that we sow
in the darkness like grain.

Worlds upon numberless worlds, through that
beautiful darkness move,
Far off, in that measureless future. All that
the prophets you killed
Dreamed in their dark strange hearts of a
heaven that should answer their cry,
Sings through those mightier hosts as they wheel
on their glittering way.
Death shall descend into night. Life shall arise
into day.

Life, exultant, triumphant, shall mount to the
Day-spring on high,
Mount to the unknown God, with the light of His
vision fulfilled,
Mount out of discord, at last, to the sun-ruling
music of love.

THE GIPSY

THERE was a barefoot gipsy-girl
Came walking from the West,
With a little naked sorrow
Drinking beauty at her breast.
Her breast was like the young moon;
Her eyes were dark and wild.
She was like evening when she wept,
And morning when she smiled.

The little corners of her mouth
Were innocent and wise;
And men would listen to her words,
And wonder at her eyes;
And, since she walked with wounded feet,
And utterly alone,
It seemed as if the women, too,
Would make her grief their own.

Ah, had she been an old hag
With shrivelled flesh and brain,
They would have drawn her to their hearts
And eased her of her pain;
But, since her smooth-skinned loveliness
Could only hurt their pride,
They dipped their pins in poison;
And, by accident, she died.

THE GARDEN OF PEACE

PEACE? Is it peace at last?
In the grey-walled garden I hear,
Under the rambling golden-crusted roofs,
The beautiful lichened roofs of Horsham stone,
Only the whisper of leaves,
And a blackbird calling.

Peace, and a blackbird calling his bright-eyed mate;
Peace, and those young, those beautiful host of the dead,
So quietly sleeping, under the mantle of June;
Peace, and the years of agony all gone by
As if they had never been!
Is it peace at last?

The blackbird flutters away in a rain of petals.
Under the open window a land-girl passes,
Dainty as Rosalind, in her short white smock,

Corduroy breeches and leggings and soft slouch-hat.
She swings her basket, happy in her new freedom,
And passes, humming a song.

She walks through the grey-walled garden,
Watched by the formal shadows of older days,
The shadows her grandam knew, in poplin gowns
And arched sun-bonnets, like old dry crumpled rose-leaves.
They peep at her, under the dark green peacock-yew.
They smile at her, under the big black mulberry boughs.
With an exquisite self-reproach in their wise old eyes,
They whisper together, like dim grey lavender blooms,
Glad of her careless joy, *"She will not grow old,*
Never grow old, as we did."

See, she pauses,
Now, at the grey sun-dial,
Whose legend, lichen-encrusted in rusty gold,

Lux et Umbra vicissim,
Semper Amor,
Was read by those that rustled in hooped brocades,
Admiringly round it, once, in its clear-cut youth.

A moment, there, she pauses, youthful, slim.
She reads the hour on its old dim dreaming face,
Half mellowed by time, half eaten away by time.
She does not see the shadows around it now.
It is only the hour she sees.
The rest is a dazzle of hollyhock shadows and sun.

She goes her way.
She darkens the deep old arch in the clipped yew-hedge,
And vanishes, leaving an arch of light behind her.

Lux et Umbra vicissim,
Semper Amor!
Is it all a dream,
This unbelievable peace?
The sunlight sleeps on the boughs.
The bees are drowsy with heat.

Tap-tap, tap-tap!
Ah no, not the telegraph giving the range to the guns;
It is only a dreamer, knocking the ash from his pipe,
On the warm grey crumbling wall at the garden's end,
Where the crucified fruit-trees bask,
Those beautiful fruit-trees,
Fastened, with arms outspread.

Tap-tap, tap-tap!
Now all is quiet again. There is only a whisper,
Calm as the whisper of grass,
On a sunlit grave.

Is it peace? Was it only a dream
That, under this beautiful cloak of the sunlit world,
We saw a blood-red gash in the clean sweet skin,
And the flesh rolled back by the hand of the surgeon, War;
And there, within,
Alive and crawling,

The cancer;
The monstrous cancer of hate,
With octopus arms,
Gripping the blood-red walls of its tortured hell?
Is it peace at last?

Oh, which is the dream? I hear
Now, in the grey-walled garden,
Only the whisper of leaves;
And now, on the southerly wall,
The dreamer, knocking the ash from his pipe
again,
Tap-tap, tap-tap;
And the cry of a bird to his mate.

IN MEMORIAM

Henry La Barre Jayne

May 10th, 1920

GOD beckoned him across the night.
The best of many friends has passed
Into that world of purer light
And peace, at last.

Oh, City that he loved, be proud.
He loved you till his latest breath,
With love too great to breathe aloud
In life, or death.

Without one thought of self he gave
His work, his dreams, his life for you.
There were more mourners at his grave
Than any knew.

It will be long before you find
A heart like his on earth again,
So quick to feel with all mankind
In joy and pain.

IN MEMORIAM

It will be long before you see
  Such faith as lit his eyes with youth;
That brave and deep humanity,
  That constant truth.

The golden heart that knew no guile,
  Those eager eyes abrim with mirth,
Conquered our darkness with a smile
  And left, on earth,

A memory fragrant as a prayer,
  A music that exalts our sky,
A light that broods upon the air
  And cannot die.

THE RUSTLING OF GRASS

I CANNOT tell why,
But the rustling of grass,
As the summer winds pass
Through the field where I lie,
Brings to life a lost day,
Long ago, far away,
When in childhood I lay
Looking up at the sky
And the white clouds that pass,
Trailing isles of grey shadow
Across the gold grass. . . .

O, the dreams that drift by
With the slow flowing years,
Hopes, memories, tears,
In the rustling of grass.

THE REMEMBERING GARDEN

UNDER those boughs where Beauty dwelt
A wistful glory haunts the air,
As though the joy she gave and felt
Had left its phantom there.

The lilacs bloom beside the door
As though their mistress were not dead,
And their sweet clouds might dream, once more,
Above her shining head.

Nothing endures of all those wrongs
That broke her heart before she died;
But little ghosts of happy songs
Croon, where she laughed and cried.

Like phantom birds, be-winged and gay,
Among the rustling leaves they go.
Her phantom children laugh and play
Upon the path below.

For, though they've journeyed far since then,
  At times an April breath will come
And lead them from the world of men
  Back to their mother's home.

No shadow of her deep distress
  Darkens their dreaming garden-ground;
But oh, her phantom happiness
  That weeps, and makes no sound!

THE TRUE REBELLION

I HEARD one say, "A proud immortal face,
Too fair for earth, in dreams has smiled on me,
And robbed my mortal bride of all her grace
And changed my love to a withering mockery."

"Then O you visionary powers," I cried,
"May I be worthier all my poor life long,
To walk with my own comrade side by side,
And shield a mortal love from that deep wrong.

"May all that in me fails of your pure light
Draw one dear hand more close to mortal mine;
Then—leave us to our memories in the night,
And, when our flickering torch has ceased to shine,

"Say, in your blasphemous heaven, if you say aught,
Those two dead fools despised our loftiest thought."

TO THE PESSIMISTS

BECAUSE I will not darken the dark sky
Of any soul with my poor clouds of gloom,
Think you I know them not; think you that I,
A fellow-traveller to Eternity,
Have never felt the cold breath of that tomb
Wherein not only tragic lovers lie,
But little faces, crushed in their first bloom,
Born but to smile in love's dim eyes, then die,
Decay, crushed down by one remorseless doom.
O friend, what need to strain for elbow-room?
We shall find room enough there, you and I.

Needs it so keen a gaze to mark all this,
The horror, the dumb pain?
"Ah, but you sing life's bliss,"
You cry, "you proffer us unrealities!
Too shallow is the strain
That will not note how all things run amiss;
But still cries *hope!* in parrot-like refrain."

TO THE PESSIMISTS

If all things run amiss, whose heart, whose brain
  Shall judge of its own errors, even in this,
Where thought is folly and all our utterance vain.
But, if these lives which come and go like waves
  Appearing, vanishing, never can be pent
    In what we call our graves,
But do return to that great sea which lies
  Beneath their ebbs and flows;
To unity with that harmonious sea;
  Oh, not to a blind sleep
In a blind Godhead (which we reckon blind
  Because of the strict walls of man's own mind);
Not to a vacant sleep,
  But something far more deep;
Not something less than personality,
  But something more, so infinitely more
That, of its own miraculous excess,
  It cried *I am, I am,* where absolute nothingness,
Before the world, with nothingness were content;
  If this great sea resume all life (as man
In memory contains his vanished hours),
  Though darkness cloak the universal plan,
Yet, on that primal miracle of being,

That inconceivable,
Impossible miracle,
The mind may base its most substantial towers,
Without which there's no hearing and no seeing,
No thought, no speech, that wrecks not its own powers.

And so, for all the nightmares that I see,
Never shall grief of mind pretend
That you, or I, or any can transcend
The deep grave heart of joy
Which is the heart of all humanity.
I hear its even beat
Through all the rambling highways of the town.
I hear that laugh of children in the street,
Which not the red-piled barricades can drown!
I hear mankind singing among its graves,
The seamen singing as their ships go down!
Theirs is the little harmony that saves,
The rhythmic law no rebel can destroy,
The close-knit order that at last shall leaven
Chaos and Death, and turn the world to Heaven.

TO THE PESSIMISTS

I see that while the inconstant battle rages
The steadfast leaves are green.
I hear the singing spheres, the marching ages.
Though war should pour its cataracts of blood
Through every seaward rift of Time and every gaunt ravine,
It cannot stain that all-embracing sea
Whose names are Music and Eternity.

Though war's wild crimson flood
O'erbrim the banks, and dye our fields anew,
All this shall be as if it had not been.
Life guards the truth. Death never yet spoke true.
Let the dark Anarch with his bloody dew
Drench the deep-ordered dust from east to west,
The world-embracing harmony shall not rest
Till all these things are folded in its breast.
Let him shout 'red,' earth has not heard or seen.
Her leaves, her fields, are green.
Though man's blind Justice bare an unjust blade,
Earth's darkling error is one proof the more

That when heaven's wider balances are weighed,
  Diviner Justice shall redress the score;
For there's one debt most certain to be paid,—
The Maker's debt to that which He has made.
If worlds of rock and stone could trample out
  The light in the eyes of a child
For a God or another's need
  This life would be
  A darker mystery,
Than could be left for one brief hour to doubt.

On this I base my creed;
  Because no other basis can be found
For life itself. Rather the battle-shout,
  The sword, rebellion absolute,
Against all life. Let the world take the plunge
  Into the dark at once; cut the foul root
Whereby we hang above the eternal night.
  What, you would write,
Bind, print on hand-made paper your despairs,
  Assume artistic airs,
When, if your dark imaginings be true,
  If but one child's heart could be trampled out,

TO THE PESSIMISTS

The only honour left you were to die.
There is no room for doubt.
Although this age runs wild,
There are some things we *know*.
Though, false as water, all things else may go,
Never shall time subordinate
The great to the less great,
The love in one child's heart to this blind dust.
If that young faith within her eyes
Were noble, that which lies
Beyond the world is nobler. This I *know*.
On this I base my creed. On this I base my trust.

FOUR SONGS, AFTER VERLAINE

I

Autumn

TOUCH the dark strings.
Pale Autumn sings.
Wet winds creep
The bare boughs through . . .
O, woods we knew,
I, too, weep.

Stifled and blind,
I call to mind
Dreams long lost,
Dreams all astray
In that dead May,
With Love's ghost.

Then I, too, go,
As the winds blow,
Grey with grief,—

Hither, thither,
I know not whither,—
A dead leaf.

II

Rain

My heart is full of the rain
As it weeps on the dim grey town.
Oh, what is this endless pain
That weeps in my heart with the rain?

The grey sky breaks into tears
On the brown earth and grey roofs.
O heart, after all these years,
Are you heavy with tears?

It rains without reason to-night,
In a heart that is numbed with pain.
A world without hope of the light
Grieves without reason to-night.

Ah, the one grief keener than all
Is to wonder—when grief is fled—

Why the tears of the old time fall
In a heart grown tired of it all.

III

LLUSION

The mirrored trees in that nocturnal stream
Drown like a cloudy dream.
The bird upon the green bough, looking down,
Sees his own shadow drown.

He thinks it is his true love drowning there,
And moans in his despair.
How many a heart on high among green leaves,
Grieves, as that sweet fool grieves.

IV

The Angel

Soul, art thou dreaming still
And sorrowing, even to death?
Up! Dreams are to fulfil!
Onward, till thy last breath,
With all thy strength and will.

FOUR SONGS, AFTER VERLAINE

Oh, hands that fold in sleep,
  When wrongs are still to right;
Oh, craven lips that keep
  Their silence in the night;
Oh, eyes too dead to weep—

Does not the hope we knew,
  Though but a hope, abide?
And now, to prove anew
  That truth is on thy side,
Hast thou not suffering, too?

Enough of dreams and tears!
  See, faint and far away
A glimmering light appears.
  Awake! It is the day!
Have done with doubts and fears.

Dark, dark against that light
  The Angel, Duty, stands.
But go to him forthright,
  Ay, give him both thy hands,
And all his mien grows bright.

His heart shall bring to birth
  Treasure that none hath told;
Wisdom beyond all worth;
  And love, more true than gold,
More sure than aught on earth;

For, though thine eyes be wet,
  He guards one bliss for thee;
One heaven, unguessed at yet,
  Whose unhoped ecstasy
Shall teach thee to forget;

Yes, even on earth, forget.

THE STATUE *

SLOWLY he bent above her jewelled hand
And kissed it. But the boy had little heart
To woo the glad young bride that others chose
And thrust upon him as his princedom's prize.
The daylight withered on her palace towers,
And all the windows darkened as he went
Wearily homeward, tortured with his thoughts,
Tired with his task of wooing without love,
Tired with the toil of all that empty speech,
And almost wishing loveless death would stay
The mockery of the loveless marriage morn.

Round him the woods, tossing their sombre plumes,
Shed heavy, wet, funereal fragrances;
And the wind, uttering one low tragic cry,
Perished. It was a night when wanderers
Bewildered there might dread some visible Death

*This is one of the author's earliest poems, not hitherto printed in America.

Urging his pale horse thro' the dim blue light
Of haggard groves and poppy-haunted glades.

His path fainted into the forest gloom
Like a thin aisle along the wilderness
Of some immense cathedral long ago
Buried at some huge epoch of the world
Far down, under the mountains and the sea;
A wealth of endless vistas rich and dark
With secret hues and carvings and—his foot
paused—
A white breast orient in the softening gloom,
A cold white arm waving above the shrine,
A sweet voice floating in a dreamy song
Till all the leafy capitals awoke
And whispered in reply! Was it the wind
Wafting a globe of flowery mist, a sigh
Of wild-rose incense wandering in a dream?

Far, far away, as through an eastern window,
Through low grey clouds, painted in curling folds,
The moon arose and peered into the nave,
The moon arose behind the dark-armed woods
And made the boughs look older than the world.

And slowly down the thin sad aisle the prince
Came with his eighteen summers. His dark eyes
Burned with the strange new hunger of his heart.

He knew how beautiful she was—his bride,
Whom others chose, but he had ever found
His love in all things, not in one alone.
He found the radiant idol of his moods
In waves and flowers and winds, in books and dreams,
In paintings and in music, in strange eyes
And passing faces; and too well he knew
The Light that gave the radiance must still fly
From face to face, from form to form. A word,
A breath, a smile too swift, and at his feet
There lay some broken idol, some dead husk,
And he must seek elsewhere that archetype
Reflected from some other shape of earth,
Darkly, as in a glass. Indeed his love
Dwelt deeper in the night than she who stole
In moonbeams on Endymion. His heart
Was lost beyond the shining of the stars.
His hopes were in his visions: like a boy
He dreamed of fame; yet all the more his love

Dwelt in the past among the mighty dead.
The emerald gloom, the rosy sunset skies
He loved for their old legends, and again
Wandered by lotus isles and heard the song
Of sirens from a shore of yellow sand.

The vanished Grecian glory filled his soul
With mystic harmonies that in broad noon
Added a wonder to the white-curled clouds,
A colour and a cry, a living voice,
Almost the visible Presences divine
To distant sea-horizons, dim blue hills,
Earth's fading bounds and faint infinities.

And now, as down the thin sad aisle the prince
Went footing tow'rds the moon, there came once more
A gleam as of a white breast in the dark,
A waving of a white arm in the dusk,
A sweet voice floating in a dreamy song.
He paused, he listened. Then his heart grew faint
Within him, as there slowly rose and fell
A sound of many voices drawing nigh

That mingled with his ancient dreams a song
Still scented like the pages of a book
With petals of the bygone years. He fell
Prone on his face and wept, for all his life
Thrilled in him as a wind-swept harp is thrilled;
And all the things that he had once believed
Seemed shattered by that wonder, and the world
Became his dreams and he a little child.
Slowly the distant multitude drew nigh,
And softly as a sleeping sea they sang:

Hast thou no word for us who darkly wander,
No lamp to guide our weary feet,
No song to cheer our way?
Where dark pine-forests sigh o'er blue Scamander,
The long grey winds are sweet,
And the deep moan of doves is heard;
While shadowy Ida floats in cloudless day;
Hast thou no word?

Hast thou forgotten the almighty morning
That smote upon the cold green wrinkled sea
And edged the ripples with a rosy light;

And made us count cold death a thing for scorning
Before the love of thee,
O mother, wave-begotten?
Yea, sunny day was worth the last long night!
Hast thou forgotten?

Whispering ever nearer like a wind
The song sank into sweetest undertone,
While the faint murmur of innumerous feet
Came onward thro' the moonlit purple glades.
The prince arose to listen. Those wild tears
Yet glistened in his eyes against the moon.
His dread seemed lost in a great conscious dream:
For, one by one, like shadows of his mind,
Sad voices murmured near him in the dark
And gave his grief their own melodious pain.

I

The gods are gone! To-night the world's heart falters,
To-morrow it may be the sun will shine,
To-morrow it may be the birds will sing.

O Earth, my mother, the flame dies on thine altars!
I would my hands were folded fast in thine,
That thou wouldst make me sleep,
Wrapt in thy mantle deep,
Far, far from sound or sight of anything.

II

Dian is dead! No more the dark sweet forest
At moondawn murmurs with a holy song.
Into the night the feet of love are flown.
No more at noon the heaven that thou adorest
Opens to greet the golden Oread throng!
Anadyomene
Is buried in the sea,
The gods are gone. Thy children dream alone.

III

The gods are dead! What god shall ever wake them?
Nay, if they lived, our world could never see;
And I, what should I do the while but sleep?

Sleep, while the purblind sons of men forsake them;
Sleep where the old world sleeps in peace with thee,
Sleep, dust in the old fair dust,
Sleep, in the same deep trust,
That all is well where none can wish to weep.

Perchance they were the shadows of his mind
That sang to him; but over his heart they crept
As winds of April over the budding leaves.
And still the rumour of innumerous feet
Stole like a strain of music thro' the woods,
Making the darkness wither into dreams;
Till, all at once, the moonlight blossomed and broke
And strowed the splendour of its quivering sprays
And white rent rose-leaves thro' the throbbing night.
Pansy and violet woke in every glade,
In every glade the violet and the pansy,
The wild rose and the white woodbine awoke.
The night murmured her passion, the dark night
Murmured her passion to the listening earth.

The leaves whispered together. Every flower
With naked beauty wounded every wind.
Under the white strange moon that stole to gaze
As once on Latmos, every poppied dell
Rustled, the green ferns quivered in the brake,
The green ferns rustled and bowed down to kiss
Their image in the shadowy forest pools.
Then one last wind of fragrance heralding
That mystic multitudinous approach
Wandered along the wilderness of bloom
And sank, and all was very still. Far, far
It seemed, beyond the shores of earth, the sea
Drew in deep breaths, as if asleep.

All slept.

Then like a cry in heaven the sudden hymn
Rose in the stillness, and across the light
That brooded on the long thin blossoming aisle,
Dim troops of naked maidens carrying flowers
Glided out of the purple woods and sank
Like music into the purple woods again.

But, when the last had vanished, the white moon
Withered, and wintry darkness held the trees,

And the prince reeled, dazed, till one strange cold voice
Out of the dying murmur seemed to thrill
The very fountains of his inmost life.
Oh, like another moon upon his night
That voice arose and comforted the world.
With one great sob he plunged into the wood
And followed blindly on the fainting hymn.

Blindly he stumbled onward, till the sound
Was heard no more; but where the gloom grew sweet
And sweeter, where the mingled scent of flowers
And floating hair wandered upon the dark,
Where glimpses pale and rosy moonlit gleams
Like ghosts of butterflies, fluttering softly
Thro' darkness tow'rds the sun, coloured the night,
He followed, thorn-pierced, bleeding, followed still.
Then, from his feet, a vista flowed away
Duskily purple as a seaward stream
With obscure lilies floating on its breast
Between wide banks of dark wild roses, grave

With secret meanings, deep and still and strange
As death; but, at the end, a little glade
Glimmered with hinted marble that implored
Its old forgotten ritual. For a breath,
He thought he saw that wave of worshippers
Foam into flowers against a rosy porch,
Leaving a moment after, only a dream
Amongst the gleaming ruins, of laughter flown,
And bright limbs dashed with dew and stained
with wine.

But suddenly, as he neared the porch, the prince
Paused; for the deep voluptuous violet gloom
That curtained all the temple thrilled, and there,
There in the midst stood out the sculptured form
Of Her, the white Thalassian, wonderful,
A Flower of foam, our Lady of the Sea.

Then, with wide eyes of dream, the boy came
stealing
Softly. His red lips parted as he gazed,
His head bowed down, he sank upon his knees,
Down on his knees he sank before her feet.
Before her feet he sank, with one low moan,

One passionate moan of worship and of love.
In a strange agony of adoration
He whispered where he lay—"O beautiful,
Beautiful One, take pity. Ah, no, no!
Be as thou art, eternal, without grief,
Beautiful everlastingly." He rose
Adoringly he lifted up his face
To hers, and saw that sweet and cold regard,
The pitiless divine indifference
Of Aphrodite gazing thro' the years
To some eternal sea that calls her still.
Adoringly he lifted up his lips
And touched her, softly as a flower might kiss,
Once, on the cold strange lips.

There came a cry
Shattering the nerves with agonies of sweetness:
The marble moved, the immortal marble moved,
And every movement was an agony
Of bliss. The marble softened into life,
The marble softened as a clouding moon
That takes the first faint rose-flush of the day.
The lovely face bent down upon the boy,
The soft white radiant arms enfolded him.

She kissed him, once, upon his mortal lips,
Then—like a broken flower—down at her feet
He fell. The temple shone with sudden fire,
And through the leaves the wild miraculous dawn
Tumbled its ruinous loads of breathless bloom
On all the glades, and morning held the world.

But ere the morn had melted into noon
There came a grey-haired man before the King
And told that, as he went to gather wood,
Soon after dawn, he heard a bitter cry
Near that old ruined temple which, some said,
Was haunted still by wandering pagan souls
Too foul for heaven, yet ignorant of hell;
But he believed it not, and therefore crept
Quietly near to watch and saw the prince
Dead on the ground; and over him there bent
A white form, beautiful, but beckoning
To One more beautiful in the morning clouds,
The Mother of Bethlehem, to whom he prayed
Himself, but never knew her till that hour
So beautiful. For all the light that shone
From Aphrodite, shone from that deep breast
August in mother-love, with three-fold grace,

Enfolding all the lesser and raising all
That wind-borne beauty of the wandering foam
To steadfast heavens of more harmonious law;
And over her, in turn, diviner skies
Brooded, deep heavens enfolding all the world,
Himself, the woods, the dead prince and those twain
Long held as deadly opposites, but now
Strangely at one, though one was but the heaven
Of colour and light in the other's breast and brow,
And both but beaconed to the heavens beyond.

But when he led a silent troop of men
Far thro' the tangled copses to that glade,
They found the young prince like a broken flower
Lying, one sun-browned arm behind his head,
And on his dead cold lips a strange sweet smile.
Over him stood the statue, clothed with light;
And he who urged the loveless wooing crept
Back, for he had no heart to face again
The pitiless divine indifference
Of Aphrodite, queen of laughter and love
On old Olympus, but to this great dawn
A roseate Hebe, handmaid to the heavens

Of beauty, with her long white glowing side,
Pure sacramental hands and radiant face
Uplifted in that lovelier servitude
Whose name is perfect freedom, ministrant
In harmony with golden laws, thro' all
The passion-broken, cloudy, fleeting years,
To that eternal Love which calls her still.

DEDICATION

WHEN all the ragged-robin ways of youth
were ours to roam,
We lost the key to elfin-land among the hills of
home.
We could not break the wizard-locks that gripped
the gate we knew,
The delicate green and golden gate of gossamers
and dew.

We hunted for the glimmering key. We thought
we saw it gleam,
A green and crimson dragon-fly, by many a chuck-
ling stream;
Till now, oh far and far away, to one that listens
long,
The laughter of our summer day has deepened
into song;

DEDICATION

Oh, you may search among the firs, and I will
search the fern;
And, if we find our talisman, there'll be no more
to learn;
For you will call aloud to me, or I will call to you;
And the elfin gate will open on our world of dawn
and dew.

It's likelier to be at our feet than hiding very far.
It's brighter than a flower, I think, but darker
than a star;
So down the narrow glen we'll plunge in bracken
to our knees,
And hunt for it as divers hunt for pearls in India
seas;

Then through the may we'll rise again like swim-
mers through the foam
And I will search the golden gorse, among the
woods of home;
And you shall wade the crimson sea of clover
through and through
Until we find the key again to all the dreams we
knew.

But, if we cannot find it there, above the woods
we'll climb;
And you may search the yellow broom, and I will
search the thyme;
And we will ride the racing clouds, and whistle to
the lark;
And, when the sky forgets the sun, we shall not
fear the dark;

For in your steadfast eyes I'll look, and you will
look in mine;
And there, together, we shall see the hidden glory
shine;
Then all your soul will call to me, and mine will
call to you;
And the gates of death will open on our world of
dawn and dew.

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